

MIDDLE EAST'S OUTDOOR, ADVENTURE, TRAVEL & LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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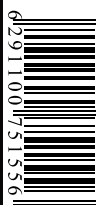
JOHN GREGORY AND JOHN YOUNG



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January 2015

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EDITORIAL

WHO KNOWS WHAT THE NEW YEAR WILL BRING?

In a world seemingly gone mad (certainly, if you tune into the news networks) what do we have to enjoy in this world? An overpriced latte? A mass manufactured new car? A walk around a mall? Hopefully, a little more.

We have friends, we have family, we have companions, comrades and kindred spirits.



Andy McNab
Editor
andy@outdooruae.com

We also have perfect weather and a fantastically diverse region and landscape to explore. This month, OutdoorUAE doth our hats, caps and head scarves to two stalwarts of the outdoor scene past, present and hopefully future, John Gregory and John Young. They came, they saw and they conquered.

Which one of us reading will be the next to step into their shoes and organise arguably the biggest weekend wadi event? Which one of use will test ourselves to the limit to open up new climbing routes and hiking trail? Which one of us, in 20 or 30 or 40 years time will sit back and say, "Yep, I didn't waste too many weekends over the years."

Many of us I hope. So today's the day to start; fill up the fourbie, pack some sandwiches and hit the road Jack. Over and out.

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**WHEN YOU'RE
DONE READING,
PLEASE RECYCLE!**

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BEST SHOTS



THE ORIGINAL
MULTIFUNCTIONAL
HEADWEAR

Here are the best shots sent in by you for the monthly "Want Fame?" photography competition! Thank you for all your entries, they were all great and it was hard selecting the best photos this month. Congratulations to the top three winners, who will each receive Buff headwear, five free copies of the magazine and the Advance Off-road book: **Rodney Barrell**, **Jun Abrito** and **Patrice de Wergifosse**. Well done!

To submit your entries, simply email us at competitions@outdooruae.com with the subject "Best Shots."



Rodney Barrell
Moto madness.



Patrice de Wergifosse
I know my wheel cover is dirty, but well, I haven't seen a black top road for 3 days.



Jun Abrito
Nature watching in Bur Dubai.

EVENTS CALENDAR

Stay up-to-date with the latest events

ASICS 12K, 8K and 4K Run Series

January 10, 7:00 a.m., The Track Golf Clubhouse, Meydan

The third race of the series takes place on the private closed off roads of Meydan with the start and finish at The Track Golf Clubhouse. A great corporate and family event for all ages and abilities. Entrants stand a chance of winning an all expenses week long holiday in the French Alps.

For more information, visit www.supersportsdubai.com or www.premieronline.com.



JLL Triathlon

January 17, 6:45 a.m., Jebel Ali Golf Hotel

The option of a super sprint or sprint triathlon is back for the final race of the Jones Lang LaSalle series. Distances are: 375m swim, 10km bike, 2.5km run (super sprint distance) or 750m swim, 20km bike, 5km run (sprint distance). The race takes place at the Jebel Ali Golf Resort and the swim will be in the sea, followed by the bike section which will take place on the open roads outside of the hotel, with the final run through the beautiful grounds of the resort.

For more information, visit www.race-me-events.com or www.premieronline.com.



Giant Duathlon Series

January 10, 8:30 a.m., Dubai International Endurance City

The five-race duathlon series is aimed at triathletes, duathletes, cyclists, runners and fitness enthusiasts, of all ages and abilities. Kids are welcome too as the courses are 'traffic friendly', providing the greatest degree of safety for all competitors. Each race is run-bike-run and will be open to individuals and teams of two. Age groups are calculated as of your age on race day. If you move age groups half way through the series, your series points will be counted for the age group you were in for your first race of the series.



M1 Run

January 17, 10:00 a.m., MediaOne Hotel, Dubai

Join an engaging vertical run for individuals and companies. It will start from the entrance of the hotel valet parking all the way up the parking floors and staircase with Level 42 as the official finishing point. The award ceremony for the best runners will be at THE DEK on 8. After the race, come as you are and enjoy the lunch next to the pool with resident DJ (discounted lunch tickets available from the online event store).

For more information, contact marketing@mediaonehotel.com or visit www.premieronline.com.



Liwa Cycling Challenge 2015

January 16, 7:30 a.m., Moreeb Dune, Liwa

This exciting cycling race with three race options (117km, 40km and 8km) will start and finish in the magnificent Moreeb Dune.

For more information, contact liwacyclingchallenge@hotmail.com or visit www.premieronline.com.



Wadi Adventure Race 8

January 17, 9:00 a.m., Al Ain

The different race categories continue with the popularity of this event (Cat Elite - Super Fit/Tri Athletes; Cat A - Very Fit; Cat B - Good Level of Fitness; Cat C - Normal Level of Fitness; Cat D - Basic Level of Fitness; Cat E - Weekend Warrior/First WAR/Low level of Fitness). To make things even more interesting, the obstacles and details of the race will not be given out to any racers before the race. The WAR 8 is definitely harder, better, faster, stronger than ever before! Registration closes on January 11.

For more information, contact race@wadiadventure.ae or visit www.premieronline.com.



EVENTS CALENDAR

Muscat Marathon 2015

January 30, 6:00 a.m., The Intercontinental Hotel, Muscat, Oman

The annual full marathon (6:00 a.m. start), half marathon (7:00 a.m. start) or 10km (8:00 a.m. start) will take you along the Beach Road, through the green and flower-filled Qurum Park and past The Royal Opera House of Muscat.

For more information, visit www.muscatroadrunners.com or www.premieronline.com.



Sharjah Ladies Run 2015

January 30, 6:00 p.m., Sharjah University City

Run by Sharjah Ladies Club, it was first held in line with the club's continuous endeavor to provide a sporting outlet for professional runners and those who want to have a good time. In 2015, the event will be themed around the concept of "Neon" including three 2km, 5km and 10km. The annual run event welcomes women and girls, and serves the purpose of promoting awareness about the importance of exercising and leading a healthy lifestyle among all age groups and social ranks.

For more information, visit www.slc.ae or www.premieronline.com.



Trans Hajar MTB Race 2015

January 30, Race Village, Al Ghuwayl, Oman

This annual race offers a tough and challenging five days of riding through Oman's picturesque countryside. Whether you use it as preparation for a Cape Epic bid later in March or take it on as a personal challenge, be assured that you will have some great memories and great rides! For 2015, the event is moving to a new location on the south side of the Northern Hajar Mountains, this will mean unspoilt mountain trails, stunning climbs, breathtaking descents, and even more adventurous routes which will create a great challenge for the competitors. Riding down from the highest mountain passes in Oman to navigating Oman's first purpose built single tracks will be a truly unforgettable 'Wild Arabia' experience.

For more information, visit www.transhajar.com or www.premieronline.com.



Vertical Run Almas Tower

January 31, 2:00 p.m., Almas Tower, Dubai

Why not climb the tallest business tower in Dubai? Fidelity Fitness Club in association with DMCC presents the Vertical Run Al Mas Tower, JLT. Conquer 64 floors, 280m and 1,600 stairs for a grand prize of 10,000 AED.

For more information, contact marketing@fidelityfitnessclub.com or www.premieronline.com.



Salomon Wadi Bih

February 6 to 7, 4:30 p.m., Dibba, Oman

One of the most popular events in the outdoor calendar is back – bigger and better than ever. Wadi Bih is split over two days – the Solo 72, Solo 50, Solo 30 and Teams 50 categories will happen on Friday, February 6th. The Teams 72 relay has been moved to Saturday, 7th February. Like the previous years, the Teams 72 relay is for teams of five runners (one female mandatory) to an altitude of 1,000m (36km) and returning to the start. Four runners shall complete the first and last stage and individual runners the other stages. The route is marked by stage markers and the teams' support vehicle transports the other team members along the route. Solos can run the full route of 72km or opt to do shorter routes of 50km or 30km. The new addition is the Teams 50 relay on the Friday. This is a shorter total distance of 50km open to all but is especially intended for families with children aged nine to 17 years old.

For more information and to register, visit wadibih.com and www.premieronline.com.



This is just a selection of the events taking place this month, for more upcoming events visit: www.outdooruae.com/event

NEWS + COMMUNITY

JOHN GREGORY

In his own words

To some in the UAE he is known as the Laird Of RAK (unofficially of course), to others he is known as 'Boss', to a select few he is Dad and to many others spread far and wide throughout the seven Emirates he is renowned as a dependable friend and in some cases a close and constant companion. There is no need for heavy editing or creating a story when a legend of the local outdoor scene decides it's time to take life at more leisurely pace overseas; it is just nice to allow them a few pages of print to reflect on their years of trailblazing adventures, simple observations and friendships along the way.

80s

The UAE, RAK, Dubai, Abu Dhabi were still 'old style' expat communities. They were times of many new explorations and experiences. They were also very social – sailing and windsurfing at the RAK Sailing Club (RAKSA +971-7-2237376) which still exists much the same today – low key, relaxed and informal. We played rugby on sand pitches at the Exiles Club – which was a meeting place for many friends. Sharjah's BSAC diving club in the centre of town was friendly and



A younger version of the man today.



Where's Wally? An exhausting Dhow weekend, can you spot JG?

informal and used to meet in the old airport buildings and control tower. Now they're lost forever – you do get nostalgic for the old places.

90s

During the first half of the 90s I started extensive walking in the mountains of RAK and the East Coast, and also areas like Masafi, Hatta and in Oman. These really were 'walks of discovery'. At that time very few expats were walking, and we were maybe the first group to find and complete the Stairway to Heaven Walk on Al Jais – myself, Dee McEnery, John Young and Robert Clecks. From 1995 to present, we started to develop many new climbing areas, with some routes up to 350m in Wadi Bih, which is now unfortunately closed to non-nationals. In total we completed over 400 new climbs.

2000-present

Anybody who has been around during this period has seen the rapid expansion of the Emirates, particularly Dubai. It has been quite an experience to see a city develop so much in such a short space of time. Personally though, in many ways Dubai was better in the 80s and 90s. It operated at a slower pace, it was more friendly and relaxed. The modern Dubai has its own fascination – it's super modern, bigger is better, great architecture, huge shopping centres, lots of restaurants and hotels. It is a fantastic tourist destination and has lots of work opportunities, but I do feel it has lost something it had as I remember it. Dare I say, it has lost some of its soul?

My favourite hike? It's not for everyone, but Stairway to Heaven and its many variations.

A favourite climb? Well it was 90m crag in Wadi Bih, but now that has been replaced by Wadi Shahah, where the new road climbs towards Al Jais Mountain. There are many excellent climbs there, both traditional and sports.

The best driving has to be around Liwa and the Empty Quarter. A very serious area once you get deep into the dunes. We did it before cell phones and GPS. Wonderful nights under a sky full of stars and very much on your own. It's still a great area to visit today.

Leopard Wadi

Not the happiest of stories. In the early 90s Dee and I were exploring a new (to us)

The famous stairway decent





A gruesome discovery at the end of, the now famous, Leopard Wadi walk

wadi off Wadi Bih. After a long walk we made the unfortunate discovery – a dead leopard hanging by its leg from a piece of wood. It was still in good condition and recently killed. We took pictures and showed them to Maraike Youngblood, who, at the time, was writing books on the flora and fauna of the Emirates. She took these to HH Sheikh Sultan in Sharjah and as a result she helped to set up the Arabian Leopard Breeding Centre in Sharjah. As far as we know there are no more leopards in the wild in the UAE. We went back a few months later to collect the dried out remains which were wanted for research purposes.

Strange encounters do not come around as often as you might think, although, I do recall once, we were descending from a peak and a local jumped out from hiding behind a rock and pointed a gun at us and said, 'Bang!' and immediately burst out laughing. Funny for

him, not so much us.

If you climb regularly an incident is only ever one step away. Fortunately apart from one heavy fall on to my back from a high crag and a couple of difficult descents I have been fortunate. No emergency rescues, but I have often descended a climb in the dark, mostly to make the most of a day. We have been called out a number of occasions to look for people, particularly on the Stairway to Heaven walk. Mind I have had several more serious close calls climbing in the Alps, due to rock falls, crevasses and forced bivouac in a violent storm.

I have been very fortunate to work with the Easa Saleh Al Gurg Group. We have been given a huge amount of freedom to run the company in our own responsible way, but always under his guidance. It has been a very privileged position and although there have been problems, the satisfaction from the work place has been a big factor in staying for so many years.

The Wadi Bih Run

At the time, apart from the occasional low-key half marathon there were no other races in the UAE. Having walked a lot in the mountains we decided to organise a race through them and Wadi Bih was the ideal location. Basically we ran from the west to east coast, gaining 1,000 metres in altitude. The first race with 14 teams was in 1993 and was mainly hashers and friends who were interested. Now it's something like 200 teams and lots of solo runners. It was low key and involved late night camping, food and copious refreshments in the wadi afterwards. That has all changed and it would be impossible to do the same now, as access to the wadi is closed. In fact, the race now doesn't even go anywhere near to Wadi Bih, which is obviously a great shame; but, Khabb Shamsi still provides a great route for the race. It is amazing how it has become so popular, probably because it is a team event and quite different to all other races.

Do I feel I can offer some advice to people? Yes. Make the best of what the UAE and Oman have to offer. There is so much to explore it is remarkable: mountains, seas, beaches, wadis and deserts. So many sports to try, and many more facilities, shops, adventure companies and literature available to everyone. Make the most of it. If an activity poses certain dangers then think through



JG and Adrian Hayes awarding prize medals (2005)

what you plan to do and what could the consequences be if something goes wrong. Good planning and good decision making during the course of what you are doing can prevent serious situations developing.

I have more than a few 'thank yous' to make to many people over the years on all sorts of climbs, dives, walks and camping expeditions. This is one of the best things about the outdoors, you just keep making new friends all the time. But long term Dee McEnery who has been there all the time and made so much possible. Long term companions like John Young (who took over organisation of the Wadi Bih Run), Adrian Hayes (The Modest One!). My sons Ian and Chris who now live in Dubai and with whom I have shared many trips, climbs, walks and camps – despite the fact that when they were younger they didn't always see the point in climbing a mountain, to sit around and then climb back down again. The fact that they're both now based in Dubai has made a big difference to life in the Emirates and a lot harder to retire.

Retrospective

What will I most miss? Friends. Without them, you would have a very lonely existence. I feel you generally make closer relationships with people you share experiences like climbing, where you are relying on them to safeguard you and get you out of awkward situations. And of course it's great to sit around a camp fire after a hard or long day in the hills with like-minded people and lots of jokes and fooling around.



Not exactly a luxury plunge pool (somewhere Wadi Bih)

JG's Top 5

- The rock pools close to Al Ain for summertime camping and swimming
- Diving trips to the East Coast to Lima Rock and beyond
- Celebrating my son, Ian's 21st, Dee's 60th and my 70th birthdays out in the wadis.
- Lots of unclimbed rock that we started to develop into proper climbing crags from 95 to present.
- Many great nights out camping with varying numbers of people, from just two of us, to 30 to 40 people – each has its own merits!

7EmiratesRun raises 1 million AED

The 7EmiratesRun team successfully completed its 575km charity run across the seven emirates in time for National Day celebrations at Dubai Festival City, raising more than 1 million AED for Al Jalila Foundation.



7EmiratesRun is under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Dubai Crown Prince and Chairman of Dubai Executive Council. It was endorsed by Dubai Sports Council as an official event on Dubai's sports calendar, with Buimer Corporation as the title sponsor.

The UAE's only cross-country charity run, which commenced from Abu Dhabi on 21st November, drew support from fellow runners, parents, children and students from across the UAE and raised ten times more in donations than last year, far exceeding its original target. The 1 million AED raised will go to Al Jalila Foundation's A'awen fund, which helps patients in the UAE with critical

health conditions who cannot afford medical treatment.

Last year Dubai-based runners traversed the seven emirates to raise funds so Mohammed Ayoub, a Sharjah toddler suffering from limb deformities, could get back on his feet. A total of 100,000 AED was raised to fund his surgeries and post-operative care. Today, he is able to walk with prosthetic support. Mohammed and his parents joined the 7EmiratesRun team today at the start line of the last leg from Sharjah to Dubai, in which more than 55 runners participated including male and female Emiratis.

Dr Abdulkareem Sultan Al Olama, CEO of Al Jalila Foundation, said: The level of support from communities and donors across the country was beyond expectation. The money raised for our A'awen fund will be fully dedicated to supporting children with walking disabilities, for a chance to live better and more productive lives. We thank all the sponsors and supporting organisations, donors, volunteers and the 7EmiratesRun team for a unique event celebrating health and philanthropy."

Race Director Wendelin Lauxen who is also Managing Director of DHCC-based German Limbtech, said: "We ran further than the distance between Paris and London, we traversed desert, mountains, passed camels and dhows and we finished! Luckily for us, we have chosen to live in a very beautiful country with a diverse landscape and this epic run is a tribute to the land we each call home.

"I am so proud of our team and all of the UAE for spurring us on – without them I am not sure we would have achieved this for a second time. This year we were joined by an all-ladies relay team and scores of students across the country. At every stage, people around the UAE cheered us on and we are grateful. Thank you and here's to next year – bigger, better and healthier."



Bear Grylls to hit UAE

Words By: Andy McNab

'Lack of rainfall', 'extreme temperature fluctuations', 'sandstorms', 'unforgiving terrain' and 'harsh environment'. Now that sounds like an awesome weekend, yeah?

Well, for some of us it might be! These are the encouraging words that the guys behind the Bear Grylls Survival Academy have come up with to try and entice you to enroll on their survival courses, which are due to start running early in the new year.

Courses (an adults-only and a family option) have been designed and tested by the survivalist legend himself – although the last thing I saw Bear do was to chew the head of a still writhing snake – I don't even know if he is still alive and I hope they haven't included that on the introductory course!

The course (which runs in partnership with Absolute Adventure) promises its enrollees to be taught techniques including: learning to forage, identifying animal runs and laying traps, wilderness first-aid, skinning and gutting, navigation by day and night, building emergency shelters, stalking, self-protection in the wild from attacks and tying knots among much more. So next time you are at an all-you-can-eat buffet you'll be perfectly equipped to get in there and beat the rest of the queue to the choicest offerings.

The courses will be located in the Dibba area, just a couple of hours out of Dubai on the east coast and will last for a full 24-hours; so, courage, awareness, physical fitness and above all determination will all be required in order to complete the courses safely and successfully. It's a good job that you will be under the stewardship of Paul Oliver and his team at Absolute Adventure because their survival credentials read almost as impressively as Bear's himself.

- On completion of the course enrollees will receive a Bear Grylls Survival Academy badge and certificate
- All meals / accommodation included during course
- Limited to 10 places per course
- To book, visit www.beargryllssurvivalacademy.com or email: enquiries@beargryllssurvivalacademy.com
- To view a video message from Bear Grylls go to www.beargryllssurvivalacademy.com

Alternatively, contact Absolute Adventure at info@adventure.ae. Price point, around 2,000 AED adult single and 2,500 AED for family.



SALE

From 25% - 50%

DUBAI: The Dubai Mall

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi Mall • Bawabat Al Sharq Mall • Yas Mall

DOHA: City Centre • Villagio Mall

OMAN: Muscat Grand Mall



March 2010

September 2010

December 2010

January 2011

February 2011

March 2011

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May 2011

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY.

OUTDOORUAE!

Founder Daniel Birkhofer shares the history of OutdoorUAE

It's like the little puppy that cross your way one day and you can't resist giving it something to eat or some attention. And before you know it, you've adopted the puppy which has grown and suddenly taken over your life.

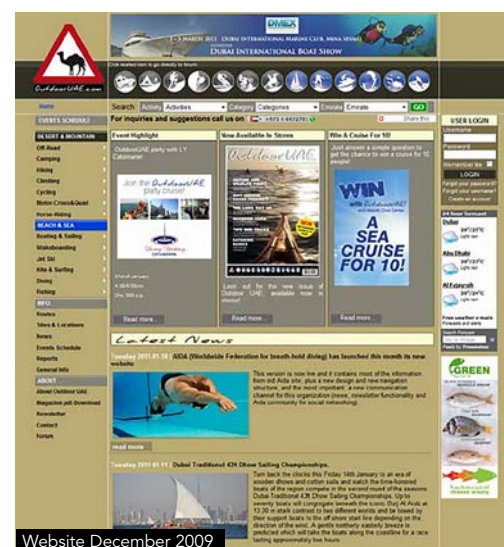
OutdoorUAE is very similar to this puppy. I don't really know when it started; when it turned from an idea to reality, from a hobby to a business. But what I know for certain is that it has dominated my life for the past years.

It all started with the simple idea when I arrived in Dubai as an expat. Apart from my brother, I didn't know anyone or anything. Leaving friends, family and a familiar society is not easy, so you try to find in new places, people to connect and things to do. In the 2005 boom, Dubai felt to me more like the Wild West – let's fill your pockets, jump on a horse and run away! Yes work was demanding and there was not much time left, and I

didn't want to spent this little bit of valuable time within the city. It was close to impossible to get information and meet like-minded people to enjoy the outdoors unless you knew some, who know someone, who has been there or done it. This desire never vanished and was never satisfied. Over the years, I found friends and information on offer about the outdoors, but any newbie would still face the same problems I had.

By the end of 2008, my company which was closely connected to the real estate sector lost all its clients. Closing the company deemed bad for many, but for me it was salvation to do something new. I had some money in my pocket but didn't want to settle a horse. I felt that during the downtime it was the right moment to start something new. My good friend Bogdan was the first to jump on the idea and worked with me to develop OutdoorUAE – a community hub to meet and bring like-minded people together.

With my business experience, I knew a community thing will not generate money especially at the beginning. So my official job was still something else with a higher



Website December 2009

focus and chance on revenues. After one year working on the community website www.outdooruae.com, it paid off and we launched in December 2009.

Over the next months, it was clear that getting the whole thing up and running will need much more than some spare time and a website. In March 2010, the first caveman of OutdoorUAE magazine was born. To bring it up on its feet took about half a year more and I had to make the bold decision to dedicate all my time to OutdoorUAE and give up my other job. It was a turbulent time behind the curtains – setup the business, get all the



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approvals and other essentials. The only thing driving us and strengthening our belief was the feedback we got from the community, that there is a market and a demand. It was certainly a new market of which no one knew the size but I believed or wanted to believe will one day be big enough to sustain OutdoorUAE as a business, and not forgetting the initial identity of being a community hub.

To be able to run the magazine monthly and as business, a new team of fulltime, ambitious busy bees were needed. So from December 2010, OutdoorUAE was on the shelves every month but we started counting the issues from January 2011 (the real count would be plus three).

So happy fourth birthday, OutdoorUAE magazine!

There would be countless THANK YOUs to so many people to fill a book, but OutdoorUAE would have never reached this without the support of the community – reading the magazine, visiting our website and liking us on Facebook (now more than 20,000). All our contributors regular or irregular – we can count more than 100 contributors, experts in their fields or just beginners with the passion to write and share their stories. The support of our advertisers – providing much needed financial support to run the magazine and of course the busy bees at the OutdoorUAE office.

Looking back when we just started in a living room on a PC, I would not have believed that five years down the road I would do as my daily business and that I am as excited as I was on the first day, never tired of working and still full of new ideas.

If you make your passion your daily business, a lot of things change. Running profitable or at least covering the costs are

major tasks that influence many decisions. It is not anymore "you can do what you want," but more on "doing what needs to be done." But we try to keep as much freedom as possible and let our passion and love influence our work. Unfortunately, there is so much work, that I never had enough time and I'm busy even at the weekends. I'm usually stuck in the office and can rarely enjoy all the knowledge we share and go outdoors myself. But since we love it, it does not feel like work. It is so closely integrated in my life that I am unable to differentiate what is work and what is time off. But the outdoor community and industry consists of such great and genuine people that many clients are friends and many friends are clients. We all share the same thing: we live and work on the things we love.

Dedicating all your time or even your life to a task is not something you can be assigned to. It is not something you do for a salary cheque, but a decision from your heart and soul. Something you cannot resist to follow no matter of the risks or the consequences. It is not something you can learn, you have it inside you or you don't. You must be willing to work hard with no day off; your business always on top of your mind. You must be willing to work, months or years without pay and even risking to lose it all – the passion, time and all the money you invested. If you have an idea and all this will not hold you back (it does scare everyone and it should). But you will only know if you start, you face obstacles and have to overcome them. In its first years, OutdoorUAE has been on the edge many times and it was a hard decision to give up or continue. At this point, a big thank you to my wife Gina, who always and continues to support me. You need a supporting and understanding partner otherwise



Bogdan and Daniel at Abu Dhabi Wakestock 2010

you will fail, whether in the business or in your relationship. OutdoorUAE is also 100% independent which grants us the freedom we want and need; there is no big group, sponsor or investor behind us, all we do is based on hard work rather than financial backup.

Looking back is always the best way to see what you have achieved, I don't like to give self praise but the OutdoorUAE team can be of what we have built. But our focus is to go forward with our visions and ideas. We will never stop or rest; working with OutdoorUAE is our adventurous journey where only waypoints exist but no finish line.

I hope this personal insight was of interest and gave you a better idea of our identity. Let's see what I will have to say in the next four years. Again, a personal thank you to everyone helping to get OutdoorUAE up on its feet and for the support over the years. We will do our best to further improve our services so you and more people can enjoy the outdoors.

MORE ACTION THIS NEW YEAR



Words By: Andy McNab

December was a quiet month on the local motocross scene. The DMX series had only one open day event and the Emirates Desert Challenge (EDC) took a seasonal month off. I guess riders and bikes need to take a breather every now and again. Despite there being little new news from Jebel Ali this month we are able to bring you an updated table of DMX points so you'll be able to see who is sitting pretty for the start of the new year and who needs a few more horse power from their beasts of burden.

Despite the lack of live action over the season, we are able to bring you another exclusive interview from the Camp Mean Green. For the last few seasons in Dubai Ross Runnalls has been one of the most talked about and widely respected riders on the local motor sports circuit. At only 19-years-old the future does look bright for this Dubai-based Saffa; he's current in pole position in the MX1 and sitting third in a

very close MX2 top of table. Thanks to Glaiza for coming up with Qs for Ross to A.

Good news is that DMX is back on track (no pun intended) and we have two dynamite installments to look forward to in January Friday 9th and 30th. As you know the weather around this time of the year is just perfect, so dive in and check out this high adrenalin hit of motorsport madness. Until next update, keep revving and Go Green!

Name: Ross Runnalls

Age: 19

Nationality: South African

Occupation: Sales Liberty Kawasaki

Race Number: 1

Bike Model: KX 450 F and KX 250 F

Class: MX 1 and MX 2

How did you get into motocross?

My father bought me a bike for my fourth birthday and I have been racing ever since.

What's your greatest racing achievement so far?

Definitely riding in FIM World Championships in Qatar.

What's your training like?

Training is a lot of cardiovascular and endurance. I cycle, run, row and ride to help get my body's cardiovascular system into the best shape to perform well on the bike. As the fitness required to race a dirt bike is unlike any other fitness in any sport, it is very unique and very tough.

Is the competition tough between other riders and even between your teammates?

Yeah, normally the competition is tough as there are so many talented riders in Dubai. But riding for Team Liberty Kawasaki is good and there's a lot of team support

What's your advice for those who want to get into this sport?

It is such a fun sport and really tests your self-belief and ability to see past fear. It is also very fulfilling when you get better and better.

How do you balance your job and training schedule?

I try to have an even balance, as partly I know I have to win races and do well. However, I need to maintain good form at work as well so balance is key in doing well as training can be very time consuming. I have to manage my time very wisely and try to get the most out of every opportunity available to get the best result possible for Liberty Kawasaki.

What's your mindset and strategy during a race?

To attack the track and go as fast as possible for as long as possible, however, this is very hard as it pushes your body to its limits



Ross Runnalls, cool as a cucumber (start of season)



physically and mentally. You have to have extremely good fitness to be able to do this as my heart rate is usually averaging around 190 BPM over 25 minutes; data shows that no other sport in the world has the same effect and pushes you in this kind of cardiovascular intensity.

What do you like most about riding for the Kawasaki team?

The team is very supportive, friendly and a positive attitude to racing. They usually are organised and everything is normally easy going and not too many major problems occur. Minor problems are always solved with enthusiasm by Liberty Kawasaki.

You are last year's MX1 and MX2 champ, do you feel any pressure this year to again make it on top and why?

Yeah of course! I want maintain a good record and stay on top, as I believe I've put in a lot of the hard work over the years to be where I am right now. Also a lot of support from Liberty Kawasaki last year helped a lot with my great season.

What has this sport taught you?

That hard work and dedication always pays off. Bad things always happen, it's about what you learn from bad days that teach you to improve and make you mentally stronger; but motocross definitely teaches you to prepare for anything.

As one of the seniors in the group, do the other riders look up to you?

I would say a lot of racers appreciate watching me and my ability, as many of them know how much hard work and dedication it takes to get the kind of speed I have on the motorcycle.

Aren't you worried about the risks?

I've gotten past the fear of having major accidents, but still, I know it is always a possibility every time you ride. I've taught myself to see past it, and believe in my natural ability, and always say a prayer to keep me safe. But when it's racing time, all safety triggers in the brain are turned off and blocked out and is solely about performing the best I can.

It's great that there is a growing community of young riders here.

Yeah I mean the grassroots is the future of motocross and the more riders. The better potential there is for champions in the future; and better facilities and clubs and more sponsorships help more people to ride like Liberty Kawasaki provides numerous riders

How do you see the sport developing in the region?

Hopefully the sport keeps growing and hopefully younger riders and their families get involved, as it's also a great family sport. Also Liberty Kawasaki have sponsored many riders which helps develop motocross in Dubai.

Future plans?

To hopefully become a top desert rally rider, I am hopefully racing desert challenge next year with the Liberty Kawasaki team and with my age, I'm still a youthful prospect. I'm hoping that some rally teams see my future potential and natural talent and help me to improve more and become better.

DMX 2014/15 Championship MX1										
Season: 2015										
				10/10/2014	10/10/2014	10/31/2014	10/31/2014	11/28/2014	11/28/2014	
Pos	No.	Name	Total	Diff	Gap	MX1 Total	MX1 Total	MX Total	MX Total	MX Total
1	731	Jack Shipton	150	0	0	25	25	25	25	25
2	18	Ben Menzies	118	32	32	22	22	22	22	22
3	1	Ross Runnalls	109	41	9	18	18	20	20	16
4	3	Dale Jullien	86	64	23	15	15	18	18	22

Legend: 1st place 2nd place 3rd place

DMX 2014/15 Championship MX2										
Season: 2015										
				10/10/2014	10/10/2014	10/31/2014	10/31/2014	11/28/2014	11/28/2014	
Pos	No.	Name	Total	Diff	Gap	MX2 Total	MX2 Total	MX Total	MX Total	MX Total
1	1	Ross Runnalls	139	0	0	22	22	25	25	20
2	555	Ryan Blair	129	10	10	20	20	22	22	25
3	23	Mohammed Jaffer	109	30	20	18	18	18	18	15
4	2	Dale Jullien	107	32	2	25	25	20	20	12

Legend: 1st place 2nd place 3rd place

DMX 2014/15 Championship 125cc										
Season: 2015										
				10/10/2014	10/10/2014	10/31/2014	10/31/2014	11/28/2014	11/28/2014	
Pos	No.	Name	Total	Diff	Gap	125cc Total	125 Total	125 Total	125 Total	125 Total
1	5	Dean Jullien	150	0	0	25	25	25	25	25
2	73	Darren Berry	130	20	20	22	22	22	22	22
3	22	Nicholas Kefford	102	48	28	20	20	20	20	DNS
4	4	Tiaan Nolan	72	78	30	x	x	x	x	16

Legend: 1st place 2nd place 3rd place

DMX 2014/15 Championship 85cc										
Season: 2015										
				10/10/2014	10/10/2014	10/31/2014	10/31/2014	11/28/2014	11/28/2014	
Pos	No.	Name	Total	Diff	Gap	85cc Total	85 Total	85 Total	85 Total	85 Total
1	19	Eugenio Barbaglia	147	0	0	25	25	25	25	25
2	22	Nicholas Kefford	135	12	12	22	22	22	22	22
3	174	Abdulla Alnuaimi	115	32	20	20	20	20	20	20
4	18	Jasim Alkubaisi	103	44	12	15	15	16	16	20

Legend: 1st place 2nd place 3rd place

DMX 2014/15 Championship 65cc										
Season: 2015										
				10/10/2014	10/10/2014	10/31/2014	10/31/2014	11/28/2014	11/28/2014	
Pos	No.	Name	Total	Diff	Gap	65cc Total	65 Total	65 Total	65 Total	65 Total
1	1	Yurajsinh Kondedeshmvi	145	0	0	20	20	25	25	25
2	22	Jamie Horn	122	23	23	18	18	20	20	22
3	11	Siguro Johansson	118	27	4	25	25	22	22	18
4	174	Ahmed Alnuaimi	112	33	6	22	22	18	18	20

Legend: 1st place 2nd place 3rd place

DUBAI MOTOCROSS CLUB



EVENT REPORT

7 days 7 marathons

Words By: Maria Conceicao

There was a slight chill in the air as I stood waiting for the first race to start in Las Cruces New Mexico and the sun hasn't yet risen.



I wasn't nervous, but I was thinking a lot, almost at high speed. Why was I, Maria Conceicao, a quiet girl from a small village in Portugal, about to embark on a mission to run seven full marathons in seven consecutive days in the state of New Mexico. I am not an athlete! And, what are all these other crazy people doing here? Admittedly not all will be doing all seven full marathons, some will do a lesser, some will be doing half marathons, but still, it's 6:30am on a Monday morning. Who are these people?

I had completed a couple of marathons years before, for other charities, I walked those marathons 100%, so I'm sure I can walk seven, in seven days, right? We did it a couple of months later and on day two I was crying, the blisters and the pains were beyond my wildest expectations. This got even worse with each consecutive day but that was nothing compared to my emotions, it felt like any amount of rational thinking that I could muster each morning was flattened by the busy Dubai traffic as soon as

each marathon started. My mood cycled between zombie-like and extreme road rage, thankfully I was too exhausted to cause any actual harm to anybody.

I'm feeling reasonably confident, at least in the beginning. One month earlier I completed five half marathons in five days, which I wrote about in OutdoorUAE. Only 10 days earlier, I finished running five full marathons in five days. This is only two extra. After all, three days after the five marathons I ran another marathon in one of my best times. So I should be ok, right?

Whilst warming up, with the sun rising from behind the Organ Mountains and the glow of dawn slowly spreading across the dried out riverbed of the Rio Grande, I was gradually persuading myself that I could do this. Just in time, the countdown began, and we were off.

The race was on a path alongside the dried out Rio Grande, out and back loops of around 3.5km each, so 12 loops required for the full marathon. After the second loop my legs felt remarkably stiff and heavy. This was not according to plan. Maybe I'd overdone it after all? I'm struggling to do even one marathon, let alone seven.

Then I met up with Eddie Vega, the "Barefoot Bandito." Eddie has run over 100 marathons barefoot. If it hurts for me then it must really hurt for him. I pushed on feeling less sorry for myself.

DAY 1. I managed to get through in a reasonable time of 4hrs 42min but it was so much tougher than expected. I was starting to think that the events of the past few weeks have been too much, too many marathons (this was my seventh marathon in 16 days and by the end of this series, it would be 13 in three weeks.)

DAY 2 was a horrible day. I woke up tired, warmed up tired and started the race tired. I then suffered from what can best be described as severe gastro intestinal distress. My coach informs me that this is common for endurance runners caused by the stress, anxiety and the high carb diet. This was to be a problem for the rest of the week.

A nice aspect of 3.5km loops is that you keep seeing the same faces and everybody is so encouraging and many are inspiring. I was happy to see Bettie and Jim everyday. I had recently read Bettie's book "The View From the Back". Bettie Wailes is 70 years old and trying to reach her 300th marathon. Her boyfriend Jim Simpson was the first American to reach 1,000 marathons and is still going strong at 72 years old.

I finished Day 2 exhausted in 5hrs 13min. I ate, I rested, but all I could think about was the fact that I still had five more days to go. I doubt that the children my foundation helps will ever truly know what I go through. That's ok, I don't expect them to, and these children suffer everyday whereas my suffering generally only lasts for as long as the

challenge. **DAY 3** was uncomfortable but better. Within two hours the sun was high so good hydration was essential.

The volunteers did a great job; at the end of each loop I was treated with snacks and drinks.

Also the genuine encouragement from race director Clint Burleson and his crew really helped me get through each day's run. I finished in 4hrs 51min.

I know that your body takes a long time to recover from these endurance challenges, but this still took me by surprise.

DAY 4 was no exception; I was starting to have problems with my feet, it seemed that so much running had

taken a toll. The top of my right foot was feeling bruised. I tried everything; changing shoes, removing laces. The most comfortable solution was to run in a brand new pair of shoes, which goes against popular belief that you should never race in a new pair of shoes, but it worked for me. I finished in 4hrs 58min.

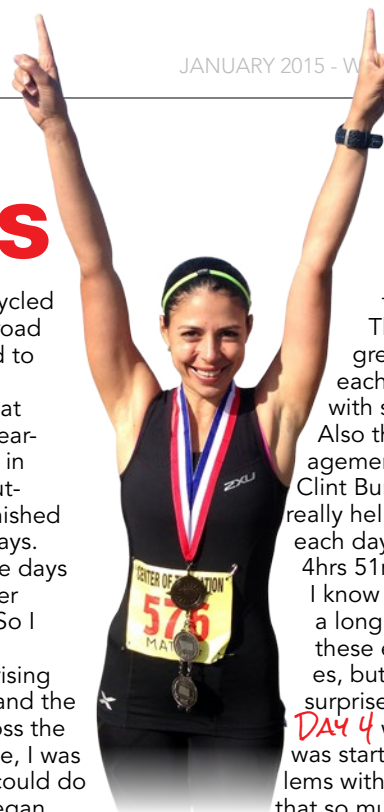
DAY 5 I was still suffering with my foot problem and my GI distress, but I battled through the day and finished in 4hrs 57min. It was an inspiration to see some fast runners at these races. Not bad for a small race in New Mexico. But the slower marathoners inspired me just as much, just by the sheer determination to stay out there and finish, even after 9-10 hours.

DAY 6 was new territory for me, my first time to attempt six consecutive marathons. It was just as uncomfortable as previous days but I think I was getting used to it, you could say that I had found my "uncomfort zone." I had a steady rhythm and finished in 4hrs 31min.

DAY 7 was judgment day. If I say that I was sore and exhausted I would be stating the obvious, but the not so obvious fact is that I was rather excited. The goal was now within reach, 4-5 hours away, it seemed like nothing compared to the almost 30 hours of running already done in the last days. The day went smoothly, I finished in 4hrs 36min. To be honest, despite the ups and downs throughout the week, the worries and doubts and the highs and lows; now that it was all done I didn't feel too bad physically.

If I ask myself now "who are these other people who run these crazy series of races?" Having got to know some of them, it's quite clear. They are people who set themselves challenging goals and who go out and achieve them. They then go and set their targets even higher and achieve them again, and again and so on.

What is my next challenge? Well officially it's seven marathons on seven continents in seven days (777) in February, but I may have to try to test myself a bit more before then!



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EU512PH



EU502PH

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- Suntour E45 with lockout
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- SRAM X4 Trigger, 8-speed
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- White/Silver (EU512)

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- Perpetual Regeneration** Charges bike with up to 100 watts while pedaling

SPECIFICATIONS

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- Suntour XCM with lockout
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- SRAM X4 Trigger, 8-speed
- Tektro Aquila disc brakes
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EU503PH

APEX

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- up to 28 MPH
- 44V Li-Ion Pro Ride™ Battery
- 100 V -240 V, Smart charger
- up to 50 miles per charge
- Arc Regen™** Activates automatically when braking, or pedaling 29 MPH
- Perpetual Regeneration** Charges bike with up to 100 watts while pedaling

SPECIFICATIONS

- Kenda 650B Trail
- 6061 T-6 alloy, balanced geometry for optimum weight distribution
- Suntour XCR with lockout rebound dampening
- SRAM X7, rear derailleur
- SRAM X4 Trigger, 8-speed
- Magura MTE hydraulic disc brakes
- Red/Black (EU504)



EU504PH

SABRE

MOTOR SYSTEM | PEDAL ASSIST

- 750 watt E-venture DuoDrive™ Motor
- up to 20 MPH
- 44V Li-Ion Pro Ride™ Battery
- 100 V -240 V, Smart charger
- up to 30 miles per charge
- Arc Regen™** Activates automatically when braking, or pedaling 21 MPH
- Perpetual Regeneration** Charges bike with up to 100 watts while pedaling

SPECIFICATIONS

- Fal Tire 26" x 4" wide
- 6061 T-6 alloy, balanced geometry for optimum weight distribution
- Fal Tire fork, tapered alloy, rigid
- SRAM X5, rear derailleur
- SRAM X4 Trigger, 8-speed
- Tektro Aquila dual disc brakes
- Matte Brown (EU505)



EU505PH

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ACTIVITY REPORT

Everest in the desert

'Everesting' involves cycling up and down a chosen hill until the total elevation gain is equal to that of Mount Everest (8,848m). It must be completed in a single ride without sleep.

Words By: Richard Lewis and Colin Ralph

Photos By: Iwona Bokinczuk, Nick Gowan and Philipp Holzman

PLANNING AND PREP

It all started back in July when I saw an article on Facebook about someone in the UK doing 'an Everest'. I mentioned this to Colin my cycling buddy and within an hour we had decided it was on. We often mountain bike together and are two parts of a regular trio, our third set of wheels, Philipp, had clearly seen we had no sense and decided this was not his cup of tea. But he would do most of the training and come along to laugh at us on the day. We had recently cycled up the new serpentine Jebel Al Jais road (UAE's highest named peak at a fraction over 1,200m) with much enjoyment, so this became the obvious choice of location for our attempt. The last 200m of the mountain are off-road and not suitable for our racing bikes, meaning we would need to ride 22.5km up the mountain at least nine times to reach the target with a few extra metres to spare.

Picking the date was crucial, as cycling in the summer heat would be dangerous and remove any enjoyment from the challenge. Then there were the ensuing engagements and visiting friends and families from the end of October; thus we picked a date of Saturday 18th October and focused all our efforts towards this. On a good week we packed in over 400km, whilst other weeks this could be 150km, depending on work commitments. Weekly we would try at least one mountain bike session at Showka just to break things up and to remember our roots! Throughout the time we also interspersed riding the hill back to back in 40° and high humidity to prepare ourselves. Philipp Holzman, our "sensible" cycling buddy trained with us and offered to be a support rider on the day to boost morale. Andy Fordham from RaceMe had been organising a few long rides at Qudra, such as the 260km ride in August, which provided a great test of our endurance levels.

Pretty much every conversation about biking from July to October revolved around our Everest attempt. As the date drew closer, work pressures and social engagements were starting to steal those precious crank-turning hours. Both of us had missed vital sessions thus leaving an element of doubt in both our minds... 'was this even possible?' The weekend before our attempt things got

serious, and we even cleaned our bikes and prepared our lists. This process of preparing a list was invaluable as it started to raise questions about what, and how much we needed. The whole attempt would be futile without a GPS device, and then some way of extending its battery life. I had done the research and duly purchased spare battery chargers and 'on the go' cables which meant we could keep going... for a very long time. The ever-expanding list of things that could go wrong was growing the more we thought about it, broken chain, tyres, tubes, wheels, brake pads, cables were all potential pitfalls, so spares and replacements were sought. With all this in mind, we were still not sure if the 'on the go' cable and plugging and unplugging would reset our Garmins so this had to be tested. Fortunately it did not, we were safe. Speeds were discussed, as we can scale the hill quickly, but we needed to preserve enough energy for each subsequent climb and so decided to take a more leisurely pace.

MUCH NEEDED SUPPORT

An old friend of Colin's was visiting the UAE for a week and knew of our challenge, Nick Gowan of Startline MTB in Tignes, France. He's a seasoned mountain man, during summer he organises a challenge where he and the other Tignes-based bikers descended the height of Everest using ski lifts to take them up. He told us that this challenge was tough, but Everesting!? The fact that Nick was concerned started to ring alarm bells in our heads, and this coming from a man who has effectively been riding a bike for a living since 2004! The great thing was Nick decided to extend his stay to watch the pain. Not being one for slouching around, he offered his support and assistance in bike preparation and logistical operations. Nick also decided he would ride every other lap up and down, the equivalent elevation of Mont Blanc (4,810m), no mean feat in itself.

We decided the lead-up week to the ride was not about riding time – that was all done now. Eating was paramount and staying off the hops was certainly going to help. Pasta, fish, tatties and veg were order of the day, with some porridge and ridiculous amounts of water thrown in for good measure. The Wednesday preceding, Colin

injured himself playing football, Nick had a cold as one does when they travel out here and my recurring herniated disk problem had flared up. So, was this luck finally turning against us?

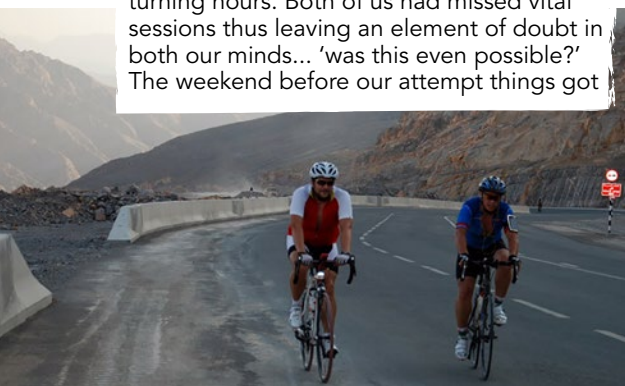
On the day of the event, we were awake early with a view to leave Dubai no later than midday with bikes and all our supplies. We drove to the base of Jais and set up camp, we had our foods, liquids, spares, tools, kits and all necessary supplies ready to be accessed. A further 30L of water needed to be dropped at the top to assist with hydrating on the way down in preparation for the next ascent.

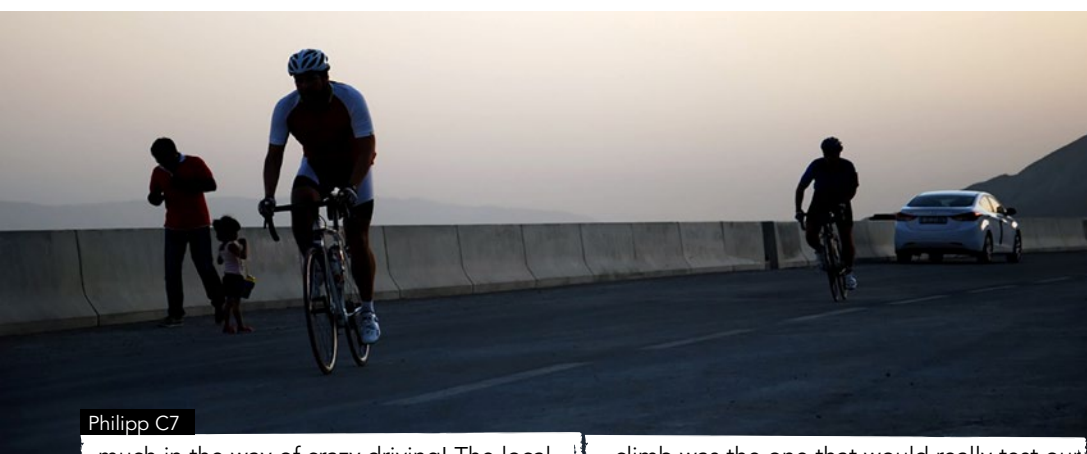
SUNSET START

At 4:20 p.m. on Saturday 18th with the temperature a mild 30°C and we set off on our first ascent. Nick, riding Colin's hardtail mountain bike, accompanied on this ascent. We reached the top in high spirits after 1h 50m. By now the light was fading and only one of us had taken lights – our first school-boy error – we had misjudged the daylight hours. The descent in twilight saw me in front with Colin and Nick following in my light. At speeds of 50 to 60kph, the descents would provide an opportunity to let our hair down and re-hydrate.

At the bottom we picked up more energy gels, refilled our bottles, drank coconut juice, stretched, lit up the bikes and we were good to go again. The next lap would be undertaken during darkness. Somewhere during these laps, Colin's heart monitor and cadence sensor began to fail, removing the self check we were using to ensure our pedals were moving at the correct speeds. During the ascent, Colin and I were in high spirits and conversing all the way about sports, drinking, boys' antics and current affairs! At some point I mentioned to Colin that, "I have no respect for people who give up and do not push themselves" and that, "I don't mind people getting things wrong as long as they pushed 100 per cent and learn for next time." I didn't think too much at the time about these lines but as it turned out they were to be more than just words.

Climbing the mountain during the night is quite an experience. There are a lot of people that go up the mountain at all times of the day. Fortunately there was not too





Philipp C7

much in the way of crazy driving! The local army followed us for a bit, and around 20 hours later we saw them going the other way, I would have loved to know what they thought of us. At the top you would meet people from all over the world, curious as to what exactly you were doing. The tales are epic and everyone enjoys taking pictures and sharing bike stories.

During climb four, Colin was beginning to have some doubts about finishing. It was now the small hours of the morning and he thinks he maybe even managed a couple of seconds sleep whilst pedaling. This is quite some feat, bearing in mind we were climbing around 10 to 12kph! At the top of this climb he mentioned he was starting to break, but the words that I spoke on one of the earlier laps were keeping him going! A swift descent of the mountain had us at basecamp – coffee on, and refueling began. At this point Colin changed over his cassette from a 24-tooth to a 28 in order to provide a better gear ratio for the next climb.

Lap 5 saw the three of us set off up the hill again, by now, we were riding with head-phones and at different speeds and re-grouping at some of the hairpins. Nick was on a hardtail MTB, Colin was spinning free on his new set up and I was grinding out the 25. During the ride, we would see the moon go down and the spectacular sunrise over the mountains. We broke the top of the climb some 11hrs 22min from setting off and we were starting to feel fatigued, hungry and were the unlucky owners of multiple aches and pains in some very strange places. At around 7:30 a.m., whilst resting on the tarmac, Philipp arrived at the top. This would provide a much needed boost to spirits. We descended with the knowledge that Philipp would be joining us on the next ride.

BREAKING POINT?

Lap 6 would be the one that broke us, the temperature had risen to over 40°C and the sun was shining down on our backs. This



The end

climb was the one that would really test our commitment. At the top, Colin was broken and talked about giving up again – this time a little more seriously. He stated again, that if it were not for my earlier words of wisdom about giving up (which was not related to us and this event) he would stop now. At the top, we were joined by Iwona, who overnight had arranged a driver (Nebu), so we would not have to drive back after the ride. She also brought snacks in different shapes and form. One thing we had underestimated was food. We were using gels and bars at around three per climb. Bottles were topped up with isotonic and at the bottom of the descent bananas and flapjacks would suffice... to a point. Iwona had come up trumps with some good wholesome junk! With temperatures on the Valley floor well over 40° we decided to take a break and gather our thoughts. Colin was as good as out, and back pain was beginning to take a grip. Of course they were the aches and pains of the ride but these were almost enjoyable!

The next climb (climb 7) was paced by Philipp, to give us the will to go on and keep us moving. It cannot be underestimated how important this was at this stage. Climbs 8 and 9 were under darkness, the short tunneled vision this provided was very welcomed. By the time we were on climb 9 we were very sore, but spirits were high and we could see the end. Close to the top Colin admitted that the main driver for him finishing was my speech about people giving up.

THE PLEASURE AFTER THE PAIN(S)

After riding 381km in 21hrs 2min (cycling time) we arrived at the top. Throughout this time we climbed 9,224m, surpassing the requirement of 8,848m to claim an Everest. We had completed our challenge – a first for the UAE.

So what now? We have since completed a coast to coast, but what of the next Everest? We have discussed doing one in each continent... would it be right to remind Colin now about my lack of respect for people who give up!

Fuelling Stats

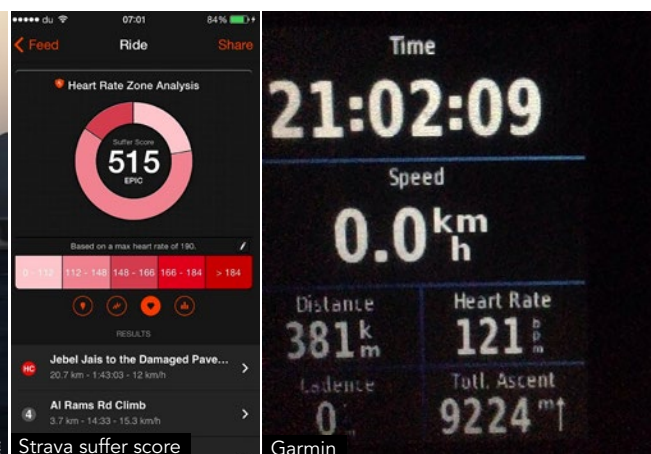
Bananas: 14

Energy gels/Bars: lost count but between the two of us 48

Litres of water: close to 72 litres

Coconut juice: 15 cans

Flapjacks: 12



STATISTIC SUMMARY

	Richard	Colin
Elevation gain	9,224m	
Total distance	381km	
Moving time	21.02 hours	
Number of pedal strokes	72,898	Cadence meter failed
Calories burned	10,308	HRM failed
Max temperature	43°C	43°C
Max speed	64.4kph	63.9kph
Avg speed	18.1kph	11.5kph

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Philipp Holzman - training, support riding and generally boosting morale.

Nick Gowan of Startline MTB (Tignes, France) - support riding and technical / mechanical support.

Iwona Bokinczuk - arranging a driver overnight and acting as a food runner etc.

Nabu and Hesham from Wheelers Car Rental (Sharjah) for providing a driver at very short notice.

William Lanihan and Pia Lund from Osteopathic Health Centre - helping fix my back to enable me to train and alleviating back pain prior to the ride.

Andy Fordham of RaceME - organising so many cycling events over the summer, which has been great to help our training.

ABOUT US

Richard Lewis - Proud Welshman from Swansea who has been in UAE since 2010 after leaving Birmingham (his home for 10 years).

Colin Ralph - A proud Scotsman who has been in UAE since 2013. Seasoned sportsman and sailor.

Philipp Holzman - German living in Dubai for eight years. Started training with guys in 2013.

Nick Gowan - Scotsman living in France. Iwona Bokinczuk - from Poland moved from Birmingham in 2011.

ACTIVITY REPORT

A 'normal' day in the Western Region

An invitation from Abu Dhabi Sports Council gave me a chance to assist a nice sporting event and also to join the genuine Emirati culture

Words + Photos By: Nicola de Corato

I've been invited as media to take pictures during a small run (4km) organised by the Abu Dhabi Sports Council in Al Gharbia (also known as the Western Region) in cooperation with the Abu Dhabi Police. There were also many participants from the national team, trained by coach Rashid bin Mohammed al Qubaisi.



Moment from the race

Being on board the pace car, I had chance to take some nice pictures of the leading group. But the day was not finished and we can say I had a better experience after the race, thanks to a deep dive into the Emirati culture.

And I'm not talking about eating hummus or watching local dances or some ladies in local dresses preparing sweets. I had chance to visit the old part of Madinat Zayed, established in 1968 by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. With 29,095 inhabitants (2005 census), it is the largest town and the administrative centre of Al Gharbia.

Madinat Zayed is situated 170km south-east of the city of Abu Dhabi and 50km from the coast. The principal road is E45, which connects the town with the E11 in the

north and the Liwa Oasis in the south.

Nowadays you can see many (almost) new buildings, but you can still enter shops more than 40 years old. After a small trip in the 'down town', taking some pictures with the local people, our great host invited us 'to have a coffee'.

We entered this majlis (a term used to refer a private place where guests, usually male, are received and entertained; frequently, the room has cushions placed around the walls where the visitors sit, either with the cushions placed directly on the floor or upon a raised shelf), the show started and we had chance to taste the local coffee, tea, dates, artiza (a local sweet bread, to be eaten with honey), fresh camel milk, soup, chocolate, and many, many other things.

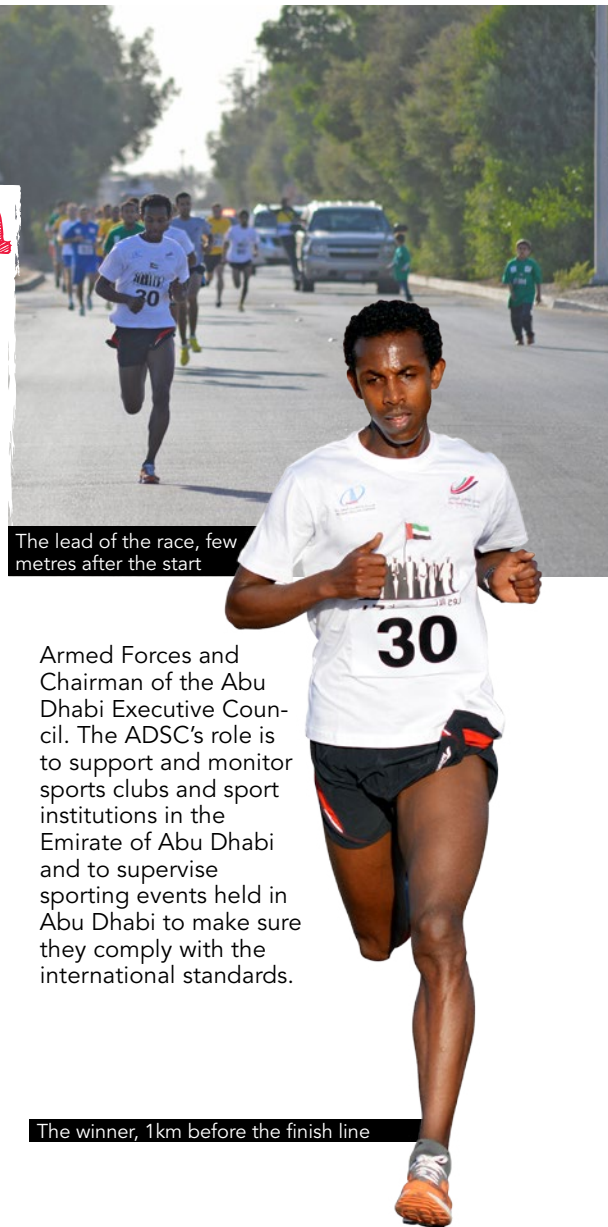
Every time a new guest entered, they invited me to say hello in the local way (touching the point of the nose). By being there, I became part of the family. I had the chance to see pictures of their family (in some photos you could also see some family members with HH Sheikh Zayed). They also showed me pictures of some camels owned by that family; some of them sold at more than 1 million AED.

Camel races are a family tradition.

The Abu Dhabi Sports Council (ADSC) was created by Decree No. (16) of 2006 issued by HH Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE



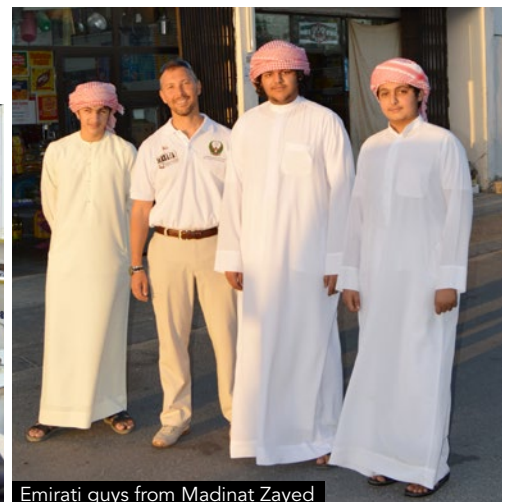
In a local tailor shop



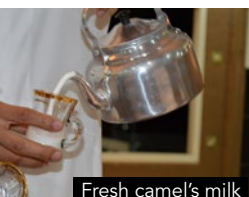
The lead of the race, few metres after the start

Armed Forces and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council. The ADSC's role is to support and monitor sports clubs and sport institutions in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and to supervise sporting events held in Abu Dhabi to make sure they comply with the international standards.

The winner, 1km before the finish line



Emirati guys from Madinat Zayed



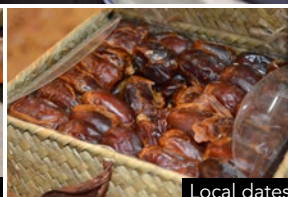
Fresh camel's milk



Artiza (a local sweet bread)



Incense



Local dates

Blogger, marathon runner and triathlete, diver and heli rescue swimmer with Bergamo Scuba Angels. You can read my blog www.dubayblog.com, contact me on social networks or via email at admin@dubayblog.it for information about this article or just to say hello.

EVENT REPORT

The Creek Striders Half Marathon Run

Time to gun past 21

Words By: Angelo Cabrera

Photo By: Barry Morgan Photography

The moment I heard a few friends of mine have been entering running events around town lately, I knew that it's my chance to get myself into running again, after having stopped for two years. It was time for me to up the ante and redeem myself – I signed up for the Dubai Creek Striders Half Marathon (that's 21km for the newbie) that was happening on December 5, and I got to finish the whole 21km in less than three hours. Oh boy.

After my first run, a 10km, at the Yas Marina Circuit in Abu Dhabi, I grew back to my old, sucky weight and my body was screaming 'exercise!' every time I walked (shamefully) by the mirror with my head down. Not wanting to succumb to a very unhealthy lifestyle anymore (or at least having some form of exercise in my weekly routine) was truly a test of discipline and will: I had to get up from bed early in the morning at around 4:00am every Saturday and make my way to the Al Majaz Waterfront from where I live, which is around 5km or so away, and ran two to three rounds around the estimated 6.4km Sharjah Corniche until my calves, quads and joints ached. The furthest distance I had covered during my training was 19.2km, which also included a 300m 'active rest' for a total of five minutes. I was worried that I won't reach my under-three-hour-finish-time goal. Heck, I even thought that the challenge I took on was madness, but I got to pull through; the die was cast, and I had to finish the challenge and prove something to myself.

I thought I did a bit well, save for going on a diet; food is a weakness of a man who loves to eat, especially when you got a mum who cooks like a Michelin-starred chef. I didn't watch my weight via the weighing

scale because it would only drive me nuts and get me depressed, but I did take notice of my progress through how my clothes loosened, particularly my pants, and the compliments from the people around me (I could only hope they were all true). But the true measure of how I well did in my training was the challenge itself.

Finally, race day came, and all I could think of was to run past that finish line. I have to admit I was still heavy. I felt the stress of my weight through my kneecaps and ankles with each step that I took, and my running stance was a bit off because I was trying to 'carry my weight'. But thanks to still being young and having an energetic spirit, I managed to heave through. I even thought of out-running one of my mates, Nandie, a veteran runner in his late 50s who still has the stamina and endurance of a 24-year-old, by going on three bursts of 100m sprints in the early stages of the run, which was pretty stupid and cocky of me because the man zoomed past me (his way of saying 'don't try to outrun me son, ha!') each time I tried to run past him. I finally learned my lesson by the third failed attempt: never underestimate the looks of an old-timer, he or she will make you eat shame-dust so mind your own pace!

I was 12km into the course when I began to feel the aching nag on my quads, especially when we hit that forsaken tunnel where I had to heave myself up through the rising zigzag path out; it really got me winded badly but I had to carry on and keep on my achingly-slowng pace. By the time I reached 16km, I thought I was taking baby steps already, my quads were sore as hell and the people I recognised that I had zoomed past during the early parts of the race were running past me. I just kept my focus and concentrated on my pace, thought

of nothing else but to just keep running.

Finally, 19km came, and then 20km after a few minutes; I thought to myself: "holy cow, I'm almost there!" After reaching past 20km, I was about to go into one final sprint when suddenly, my calves started to succumb to slight cramp; I forgot that my legs hadn't covered that distance, it was new territory



to them. Feeling dismayed, I had to run at a moderate pace, until suddenly, one of my running mates (who I gunned past through for at least 400m away in the early stages of race) snapped my attention. "Oh man, I can't slow down," was what I remembered saying to myself when I finally mustered the strength to dash through the final kilometre of the course and finally, past the finish line; I did it, thank goodness!

Finishing the whole 21km is an achievement in itself, achieving my target finish time was another. I admit that I lowered my target before checking my official time, as I was already feeling happy of what I had done. But surprise, surprise: my official gross finish time is 2hrs 25mins 1sec – I can't believe I did it!

It really feels amazing to know that I have managed to reach where I am now; I didn't imagine that I could go that far. Now, I am aiming to beat my current finish time by 15 minutes in the next 21km run that I'll be taking on this coming February. I would also like to thank my running mates Dan, Liezl, Nandie, Reychel and Arlan for getting me back on track. And last but not the least, Daniel, the man who started it all by challenging me to my first 10km run (thanks man, I owe you a lot).

Until then, keep get on track and get running!



ACTIVITY REPORT



Equestrian adventures in the UAE

Words By: Cindy Stadelmann and Cosmo

Hi. I'm from Northern Germany and have been enjoying Dubai for the last five years. I'm 1.68m tall, vegetarian (absolutely love carrots) and am slowly, slowly turning grey. A mate of mine from my hometown also moved here a couple of years ago, and we hang out together every day. I have to say that he and I have an outstanding line of famous ancestors that we can be proud of. I will tell you more about it now. My name is Cosmo, I'm a Holsteiner and I am a horse.

Horses are big business in the Middle East. Over the next few months we will look at various aspects of this vast sport that has such a huge following here in the UAE amongst both locals and expats. There are many disciplines to horse riding: endurance, show jumping, eventing, racing, dressage, as part of a triathlon or plain and simple, beautiful hacking. My articles should give you insights into the busy schedules of those in the equestrian industry in the UAE and life at a stable.

The UAE has a vast number of facilities that range from little desert stables to extravagant equestrian centres. I ended up at a great stable in Al Khawaneej where my wellbeing is the main priority of the staff.



Praise after being good

I spend my days surrounded by palm trees, friendly locals and little roads away from the hustle and bustle of the big city. The stable is a little oasis with lush grass paddocks and offers riders the chance to learn in peaceful surroundings. The stable specialises in show jumping but also gives you the chance to hack around in the neighbourhood and explore. I'm also up for an adventure with my owner. In this article, I want to share details about life at my stable, jump training and taking part in shows.



Evening hack with Cosmo

My yard is called Al Hamra and is run by Kamal Ziri. Kamal is a very experienced show jumper, who trains and manages a team of adolescents and brings them to shows. In addition to this, he acts as one of the judges during competitions. He knows his stuff! Most of my neighbours at the yard are of European descent as these types of horses excel in jumping compared to their local brothers and sisters, the Arabians. Although I must admit the Arabians are very good looking. Me and my friend, Giacomo, owned by Natalie Christodoulou, are purebred German Holsteiners. Everybody knows that we Holsteiners are pretty special horses. My owner is Cindy and I'll let her tell the rest of the story.

The yard

The yard hosts around 50 horses. The days run like clockwork with experienced grooms knowing exactly what to do. Horses do like their routine. All receive grain-based feed three times a day along with plenty of hay. They are provided with water non-stop. Owners decide on supplements for their horses. Because of the climate here in the UAE electrolytes are a must and horses like humans take them in the form of a powder mixed under the feed. If you don't ride, the horses are exercised via a walking machine (imagine a huge hamster wheel lying on its side, going around and around), lounged or enjoying the sun on their backs while munching on grass



Rider	Number	Rank
Natalie C	046	
Horse	Time	
46 COSMO	34	
Club	Faults / Penalties	
AI H E C		

Cosmo with a clear round so far

in one of the paddocks. A close eye is kept on vaccination cycles and the overall health of the horse, including dentist visits, chiropractors and farriers trimming the horses' hoofs on a regular basis.

Every week, Kamal sets up a new and well-planned jumping course and gives personal and group lessons. Dealing with individuals in regards to humans and horses, Kamal knows his clients by heart and customises his training to meet the needs of the "couple" i.e. that of the horse and the rider. Whether you are having a lesson or not, he always keeps an eye on your riding and coaches you on how to improve. You will often hear a North African French accent drifting across the stables saying, "Shoulders straight, sit back. No slacking."

Showtime

Come weekend, it is time to attend the shows. The venue locations vary from weekend to weekend and Kamal drives all registered horses including grooms to the competition. If the drive is far, the horses and grooms will stay overnight. With these kinds of logistics, it is easy for the riders to focus on the "work" and prepare themselves for the course. In the UAE you have two types of shows: Affiliated and Unaffiliated. The affiliated shows are organised by the UAE Equestrian Federation and offer four different levels of difficulties: Beginners (100m), Small Tour (115cm), Medium Tour (130cm), Big Tour (140+). Some shows are just national, others are international. These require the rider to have a license from their home country. They

will then represent their nation during the competition. Unaffiliated shows are hosted by individual stables and cater to riders with lesser ambitions. Having said that, the latter type of competitions are lots of fun too, and boast with their more relaxed atmosphere. As jumping is very popular in the UAE, there is a big field of competitors that all have exquisite horses. I highly recommend visiting the shows and watching the great skills of the local riders. Riding amongst the Arab population is extremely popular and UAE competitors and are determined. There is good reason why Saudi Arabia's Show Jumping team got Bronze in the 2012 Olympic Games and 2014 Asian Games. Many of the teams from the UAE, Qatar and Kuwait spend their summers in France and Germany at professional stables to enjoy cooler temperatures and expert training. You can find the season's calendar under www.eef.ae (go to "Show Jumping", then "Show Jumping Calendar Season"). Admission is free.

Competitions

At the local shows and before each "class" starts, the course and the height of the jumps are set and the riders have the chance to memorise the course by looking at a sketch and walking the course. Walking the course is very important as preparation and Kamal escorts his team and coaches each individual on what to watch out for, how many strides to plan in between jumps, how to deal with a new jumping environment, etc. Everything is easy at home but once you enter a new ring, a little decoration pot plant might be

the scariest thing for your trusted steed. Often on TV before a competition begins, you see Show Jumpers purposely strutting around between jumps and counting their evenly spread out steps. There is "method to the madness." Counting the steps allows the rider to judge how to best manoeuvre his or her horse through the course. Two tight strides here? Three longer ones there? Where do you turn to approach the next jump? If you get it wrong, you increase your risk of knocking down poles and not getting placed. To be successful, horse and rider need to focus, stay relaxed and work as a team. A great example for other riders is Natalie Christodoulou for her focus, staying relaxed and skill. Natalie is well known in the show jumping community and has been successfully jumping her horses here in the UAE for the last few years. Her positive attitude, good eye and passion are inspiring for her horses and any rider who watches her. At rapid speed, she grows her horses into skilled animals that confidently jump with her over anything that gets in their way.

To sum things up: a day at the "show" leaves you with the impression that the jumping community is an extremely nice group that is competitive but also very supportive. Riders cheer each other on and congratulate their opponents for accomplishments and laugh together about mishaps much as they do in any other adventure sport. There is great camaraderie. Once done with the competition and the prize monies are given out, the horses are shipped back to the stable and get a little break by having some time in the paddock and hacking in the desert.

Next month, I will tell you all about hacking in the desert. A little treat after tough competitions and the true adventure side of equestrianism here in Arabia.



Kamal counting paces with his riders during the inspection



Cosmo competing at Bab Al Shams

ACTIVITY REPORT

DOWNHILL DREAMS IN MUSANDAM

Words By: Sean James

It's not often you get a Strava post that looks like this. At first glance it might seem impossible to have nearly 3,500m of descent and only 500m of climbing. For some, it could be the perfect ride. Musandam has lots of downhill and it all is stunning, passing through some of the deepest wadis and canyons that the Arabian Peninsula has to offer.

So how did we manage to produce figures like this? We used a support vehicle to take us to the top of the mountain. At the high point we unloaded our bikes and were then at liberty to freewheel all the way back down. At the bottom we waited for the car to catch us, loaded up the bikes and transferred back up the slope to repeat the process on another amazing downhill. This sort of mountain biking using mechanical uplifts such as ski lifts and vehicles is very popular around the world and this week we brought it to Oman.

The Middle East cycling scene is flourishing at present and particularly the mountain bike sector. There are races and tours and tracks and training centres and teams and at this time of year, there is also perfect weather. Many top athletes are moving here over the winter months to take advantage of the climate and training opportunities.

ALTITUDE

In December, we drove out of Dubai on the 611 past Ras Al Khaimah and crossed the border to spend a few days exploring the mountain bike trails around Khasab and the hills there. The mountains that hide Khasab from the UAE are impressive. The locals know them well and are the best source of knowledge for secret wadis and shortcuts through the rocky terrain. The highest point here is over 2,000m. At this time of the year the weather can even be considered cool of-

ten dropping into single digits. Many of the mountain bike trails are well over 1,200m and breathing the air feels refreshing. At 1,800m the air pressure is approximately 81% of that at sea level. This means any extended stay here will result in your body adapting to the change and producing red blood cells in a process called erythropoiesis, after erythropoietin, or EPO. This is also a popular tourist site and you will frequently see convoys of mountain safari jeeps that head up the hill whenever the huge cruise ships are in Khasab.

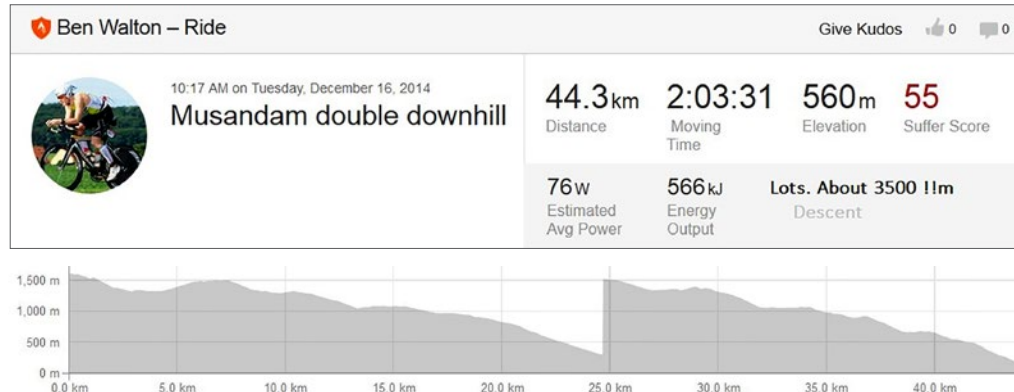
We were staying in the newly built Atana Khasab hotel in the centre of the port of Khasab. The area is still being developed but has changed extensively over recent years. It still consists of large, empty waste ground crisscrossed with canals just waiting for the developers to move in. There is a

detailed plan from Muscat that will provide the direction for the future and surely must position the whole Musandam area as an adventure capital not just in the Middle East but the world. The scenery here is spectacular. Most residents of Dubai will have been to Musandam on a dhow cruise and this is what nearly all visitors do. A few will come and camp on the spectacular sites overlooking the sea and mountains. Even less will bring their bikes.

We aimed to ride the gravel trails around the Jabal Harim area. Thanks to a desire to connect and provide for the remote hilltop villages there is a progressive road/track building strategy. These tracks are perfect for mountain biking. The summit of Jebel Harim is actually a military base so it's not possible to stand on the top. However you can get pretty close. The road drops away spectacularly on either side and provides continuous descents of 1,500m in each direction. Over a distance of about 20km this makes for an extreme adventure. Even better when we knew there was a vehicle following us ready to give us water and ferry us to the top of the descent.

After a leisurely start and a buffet breakfast, we packed the car. There are two main descents that are world-class mountain bike descents. Both start at the same point in the narrows below the military post. The





descent back towards Khasab is a distance of 20km and has a drop of 1,705m. Some of the steepest sections of both downhills are on this side reaching 33% and the edge is always close. The slightly shorter descent towards the notorious Wadi Beih checkpoint feels faster and less steep but it is not.

To add to the thrill as you ride, many times at the side of the track you are warned by large signage in red that you cannot pass through the internal checkpoint unless you are a GCC citizen. The situation is constantly changing and expats jump at the chance to tell their particular story. However you are allowed right up to it and the guards are actually quite friendly. If access is ever reinstated and visitors are allowed to pass this will be the greatest drive/ride in the world and not just one of the best as it is now: a spectacular mountain road of over 100km connecting Khasab to Dibba.

It takes 40 minutes to an hour, a rugged car and nerves of steel from your passengers to drive from Khasab to the start point at 25°57'51.00"N 56°13'19.07"E. Always bag the driving seat early as being in control probably helps to settle any nerves. If you choose to shun the lift and ride up, the climb will surely give you extra kudos and bragging rights. The ascent could be considered a rite of passage if you are thinking of entering any of the big mountain bike stage races such as the Transhajar or the Cape Epic. This is ideal training ground and anything after this will feel considerably easier.

TRUE CLASSICS

The height gain and gradient of these climbs are comparable if not harsher than the Alpine classics such as The Col du Tourmalet, Mont Ventoux and the Col du Galibier

The annual Musandam Adventure Race started by Mike Nott and now organised by Absolute Adventure has competitors riding up from the Wadi Beih side then descending down the other side to finish in Khor Najd at one of the hidden bays by the sea. When I did the race, most of the descent was in the dark and all this after a 30km sea kayak and a 20km run over the mountains from Lima.

Previous issues of OutdoorUAE have talked about the skills required to improve your downhill experience. You will need all of those for this trip. Weight back, easy on the brakes to stop sudden movements, correct positioning of the bike going into the corners, relaxed grip on the handlebars to soak up the bumps and hits and looking ahead to spot obstacles will all help.

REVERSE EVERESTING

There is a challenge on the Strava website that sets riders the challenge of climbing the height of Everest on a bike; 8,850m of repeated hills climbs on the same hill. That's pretty tough. After riding these descents you start to think maybe a reverse Everesting (turn to page 18 for more info on Everesting) attempt might be more fun. Perhaps descending the height of Everest in a day in as quick a time as possible would



be the sort of challenge that would appeal to more people. Now that's an adventure. If the Khasab area was as close to Dubai as say Showka or Hatta, this area would be jammed every day and everyone would be buying downhill, full suspension bikes. It's not. It's way up in the hills of Musandam overlooking Iran. Too far but for the hardest of riders to venture. But then that could also be its attraction.

	Length (km)	Total Ascent (m)	Height start (m)	Height Top (m)	Average gradient (%)	Max gradient (%)
Mont Ventoux	21.4	1639	283	1912	7.6	12
Col du Tourmalet	19	1404	711	2115	7.4	10.2
Col de L'zoard	15.9	1095	1266	2361	6.9	12
Col du Galibier	34.9	1924	718	2642	5.5	12
Jabal Harim (from Khasab side)	20	1705	192	1613	8.5	33
Jabal Harim (from Wadi Beih side)	17	1495	378	1613	8.8	17.1

FISHING ON THE MAYA FOOTSTEPS

Guatemala 2014

Words By: Antonio Varcasia

Photos By: Antonio Varcasia, Sasha Sharai, Daniele Macis and Dario Alicicco

According to the Popol Vuh*, the sacred book of Maya, the waters of the oceans have an eschatological meaning, like almost all of nature.

The gods decided to create the waters and the mysterious beings that inhabit and defend it. Then the gods assigned to water the mission of generating life itself. Oceans, mysterious and unexplored places, were quickly identified as the entry to the inframundo, or a sacred place for the Mayans which represented life and death. For this reason, everything related to water was considered sacred, and also for this reason people that went fishing often used to recite prayers that ask their gods' permission and perform rituals for the sacrificed fish. This intimate relationship with nature and especially the origins is something that never disappeared from Mayan culture

and that still permeates society; thus making a fishing trip to Guatemala not only a tourist experience, but something much deeper, if you have the curiosity to go a bit 'deeper' into the local culture.

The reason I am here to write once again on the country of the isthmus is the sacredness of nature and the deep respect for the creatures which is something transcendent, which goes beyond the common sense and has contributed to the fact that this country protected (since 1997 – making it one of the first country in the world to do so) one of the most beautiful and majestic species, one that every angler dreams to fish at least once in his life, the sailfish.

THE SEASONS AND THE SPECIES

Guatemala is known as the land of eternal spring for its lush vegetation and blooms, and a climate that is rarely as hot and torrid as its Central American neighbours. Despite this, the two main seasons are well marked here as elsewhere in the tropics, the dry and wet seasons. The latter starts in May and ends in October, it is characterised by scattered rains, sometimes very strong, which effectively swell the rivers and make sea fishing more difficult, for the fact that pelagic species (all billfish, dorado and tunids), move further offshore in search of more oxygenated waters.

The dry season, which is the high season for offshore fishing, runs from November to April. The period between January and March is normally identified as the "peak season", where the environmental characteristics, especially related to oxygenation and water quality allow an exponential number

of catches - particularly of sailfish which can reach up to three digit numbers in a single day. Marlins are also caught frequently between November and January in Guatemalan waters, most often Blue and Black, although striped marlin are also caught during this period.

Dorados, also of considerable size, are present throughout the year, although are more abundant during the wet season, when the amount of debris and logs drifting in the ocean is much greater and are colonised by these beautiful fish. Yellowfin tuna are also present, especially when the cold winds from the south create the impressive migrations of porpoises to warmer water. The tuna travel with the dolphins and come in schools of fish sized between 20 and 60 pounds and are caught using spinning and popping. Other tunids, such as Skipjack and Bonitos are present and are approached using trolling methods. The same technique is also used to hook the "beast" or Marlin.

We need to specify the impressive amount of sailfish during the peak season in Guatemala has effectively spoiled charters and anglers too, so days with rates of four out of eight or three out of 10 fish are considered "low", the number of sailfish raised during high season in many other places of the world are comparable with low season numbers in Guatemala. The low season is interesting because charters have much more affordable prices and a climate that is still better than that of the end of the dry season.

The preferred technique for success is trolling, in which Guate are true masters. Trolling generally takes place between 10 and 40 miles offshore, at a speed between





six to seven knots, depending on the target and choice of lure. Although the objective is always to perform the most spectacular technique (i.e. with switch and bait normally with Ballyhoo rigged and 15/20lbs on stand-up rods), the captains decide different approaches according to the spirit, initiative and experience of anglers, so it varies from boats that have five to seven rods in water all armed (lures/baits and hooks), to others that use only teasers and do everything to let the fish get under the boat and then perform the switch and bait. This latter option is also only viable when the angler is a fly fisherman, and the crews are usually very skilled in this technique.

INSHORE FISHING

Fishing inshore is much less marked by seasonality, because the coastal fish are less sensitive to water variations in salinity and oxygenation. Inshore the tide makes the difference. With an excursion that can safely exceed three meters, it is easy to understand what can happen with high or low tide. The high tide brings forage fish, more oxygenated waters and turbulence – which excites fish and allows you to fish near the rocks. The Pacific coast of Guatemala extends for about 250km and is mostly made up of dark volcanic beaches, often broken by the mouths of several rivers, and to the south, from Iztapa to Monterrico, it is traversed in parallel to the coast by 120km artificial channel, called

Canal de Chiquimulilla, which is also a coastal mangroves ecosystem. Champerico, San Jose (Quezta), Iztapa and Monterrico are the main harbour areas, that are protected with a bulwark of volcanic rocks, and are excellent spots for fishing. From shore, the mouths of the rivers, channels and some deep beaches are suitable for fishing, while from the boat the options are different and depend largely on the size of the boat. In the last three years 300 artificial reefs at depths of 20, 50, 70 and 100 metres and consisting of volcanic rocks and concrete footings (such as those used for breakwaters) have been sunk within five miles of the Puerto San Jose coastline. These artificial reefs are part of a joint project in which partners, including the Guatemala Tourism Board (INGUAT), aim to promote small-scale artisanal fishing for commercial species (pargos and snapper etc.) and then develop longline fishing out to 10 miles, which can lead to incidental catches of billfish. Indeed it is a smart way to allow and grow the two parallel economies and protect the sailfish, which remains the country's best resources for sportfishing tourism.

Bottom fishing techniques, such as, inchiku and vertical jigging (looking for bottom predators like snappers and groupers) could also be practiced in these spots. Several species could be fished inshore like Jack, as Crevalle and Big Eye; as well as Roosterfish, Spanish Mackerel, Barracuda, giant needlefish, at least two species of snook and of course all



bottom fish. Topwater spinning (lure casting) is the inshore prince technique with rods from 15 to 30/40lbs and reels class 5000/6000 with high ratio (6.2:1), to recover skipping lures, poppers and pencils at supersonic speed. Trolling inshore is clearly possible, with live or



dead baits or with lures, and often it is also the best way to catch oversize Roosterfish and Cuberas.

GETTING THERE AND HIGHLIGHTS

Guatemala's biggest and only international airport is Guatemala City, it is about a three-hour flight from Miami. Direct solutions are possible with prices usually higher. If you pass by USA it is good to remember that it is important to get ESTA visa prior to visit and that every traveller in transit must pass through the migration service. Reaching Puerto Quezatal/San Jose is quite easy (a two to three hour drive) and normally different operators set up a shuttle service to and from the airport.

Although Guatemala has made great strides in safety, a foreign tourist is often the centre of attention, so it is good to be careful and not to venture out alone with phone/cash/expensive cameras etc. In Guatemala there is no need to make any mandatory vaccinations, but you should have tetanus and typhoid. It is 'important' to bring a good supply of repellent (mosquitoes are always present, from the highlands to the beaches) and also adequate UV protection.

It would be a shame to visit Guatemala without fishing, but also to fish without knowing the beauty of this country. As mentioned at the beginning Guatemala is really the last

stronghold of the spirit and of the Mayan culture. The INGUAT, through its website (www.visitguatemala.com) always offers themed itineraries with different focuses, like history, cultural and sporting, and has also created an app available for iOS available on iTunes (itunes.apple.com/us/app/fishing-guatemala/id944967272?mt=8).

Among the places not to be missed and

relatively close to the Pacific we suggest Antigua, the Maya poblados of Lake Atitlan, but also those of the highlands, like Quetzaltenango (Xela). We can recommend the guide who was with us for two weeks, and was competent and professional: Selmy Licardi (selmylicardi@gmail.com).

** The Popol Vuh is the greatest works of pre-Columbian literature. It is a text written in Quiche, a Mayan tribe old language, but with the Latin alphabet, which told the religious traditions, and the history of the Maya Quiché in the form of myth, and that the end of the book includes a chronology of their commanders up to 1550.*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrXMbBoilCM

The song is a collaboration between Reality Fishing and "Wave the flag" and an interesting experiment that combines fishing and music. "As a great lover of music, it has long been on my mind to write lyrics that spoke of the emotions that we live through our fishing... thanks to Vincenzo Lorusso, aka Mr Postman and frontman of Wave the flag, we were able to create something nice," says Antonio Varcasia. The text speaks of the adventures in Guatemala of the Reality Fishing crew from Caribe Verde to Iztapa through Tikal.



TRAVEL + ADVENTURE

From Alpine Passes To Coastal Roads: TOURING THE ADRIATIC ON TWO WHEELS

One couple, one BMW R1200GS,
one route map, many happy memories.

Words By: Tiina Kontra

Photos By: Jarno Elo

The Adventure Begins: Zargreb, Slovenia & Austria

In the early hours of a July morning I landed in Zagreb with my husband. The greenness of the surrounding nature and soft sunshine welcomed us back to Europe after having spent a long and busy period in Dubai. In Croatia, we were looking forward to a well-deserved break, and a nine-day motorbike adventure before continuing the summer holidays in our native Finland. We had booked the "Up 'n' Down Tour" with "Mototrip", an adventure that promised motorcycling in the majestic Alps and along the picturesque Croatian coast.

We were astonished by the Croatian hospitality starting right at the beginning when Mototrip's owner, Darko, met us in the airport. He took us personally to our hotel and recommended a refreshing walk to the centre of Zagreb and a nice restaurant. In the evening, we discussed our route, and Darko gave my husband a map, with a very clear itinerary, GPS coordinates, and most importantly, the keys to a dual sport BMW R1200GS motorbike.

The next morning, we packed all the essentials to the cases, and left everything else with the hotel awaiting our return. Then we started the engine and the adventure! During the first days, we visited the Slovenian and Austrian Alps. We were blessed with beautiful weather, clear skies and lots of sunshine. Many others had been waiting for weeks to be able to head to the same altitudes due to the snowy and foggy weather. In Austria, we enjoyed the curves of Grossglockner High Alpine Road, and in Slovenia, we climbed the road to the Mangart Pass, the highest road of the country. We also made a detour to Italy to admire Lago di Predil. Altogether, during the first day we rode approximately 300km, followed by 500 Austrian kilometres on the second day.

Slovenia - Top of the Mangart pass.



Croatian country side



Austrian Alps in background.

Back to Croatia

On the morning of the third day, we said goodbye to the Alps, and headed to the Croatian coast. Through the visors we saw various vineyards, roads winding alongside small rivers and green forests. The scent of lavender was in the air. We visited Škocjan caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the smallest town in the world, Hum. For lunch and dinner, we enjoyed local delicacies: truffles, cheese, olives and some glasses of very good grape. Daily routes varied here between 200-300 kilometres, which was perfect, as we were getting closer to the Adriatic (Adriatic) Sea and warmer temperatures. In addition to paved roads, my enduro-addicted husband insisted on taking couple of gravel roads as well. His enthusiasm finally took us to a narrow rocky hiking trail, which did not make a good combination with the heavy bike, luggage and slick tyres. Finally after an hour of struggle, we managed to get back to a proper road – this stint was surely the biggest test to our relationship during the trip, but does make another great story to tell.

During the fifth day, we took a ferry from the mainland to the island of Cres. We reached our destination of Mali Lošinj in the

early afternoon with plenty of time to explore the rocky island and relax in the hotel's jacuzzi. The next morning, we woke up to a thunderstorm. Luckily, during breakfast the storm settled down, and we decided to get out onto the road with rain gear. It was only raining for an hour, and before reaching the ferry, the sun was peeking through the clouds.

Back to the mainland, we headed to Zagreb via a town called Plotvicaselo. Picturesque Plotvicaselo, was our last stop of the day, a wooden village with farm animals strutting about and living freely on the land. The peaceful countryside and easygoing lifestyle made us want to stay forever. However, the last day of the trip kicked in the next morning with a walk to Plitvice Lakes natural park. After the unforgettable natural experience, we hit the road one more time and headed back to Zagreb with heavy hearts.

Definitely Recommended

Up 'n' Down was our first 'longer' tour together as a couple. Previously we had taken a few daytrips in Finland and the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. The trip was very well organised, with excellent routes, attractions and hotels. Going ahead with a local trip organiser saved us from hours of studying and assessing different options. It was also very important to us that we felt safe, and that, in case of any problems on the road, we could get assistance or advice anytime. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that we recommend this trip to the beautiful and versatile region of Croatia and Slovenia to any bikers or biker couples.



From frisky alpine air to embracing Croatia coast.

TRAVEL + ADVENTURE

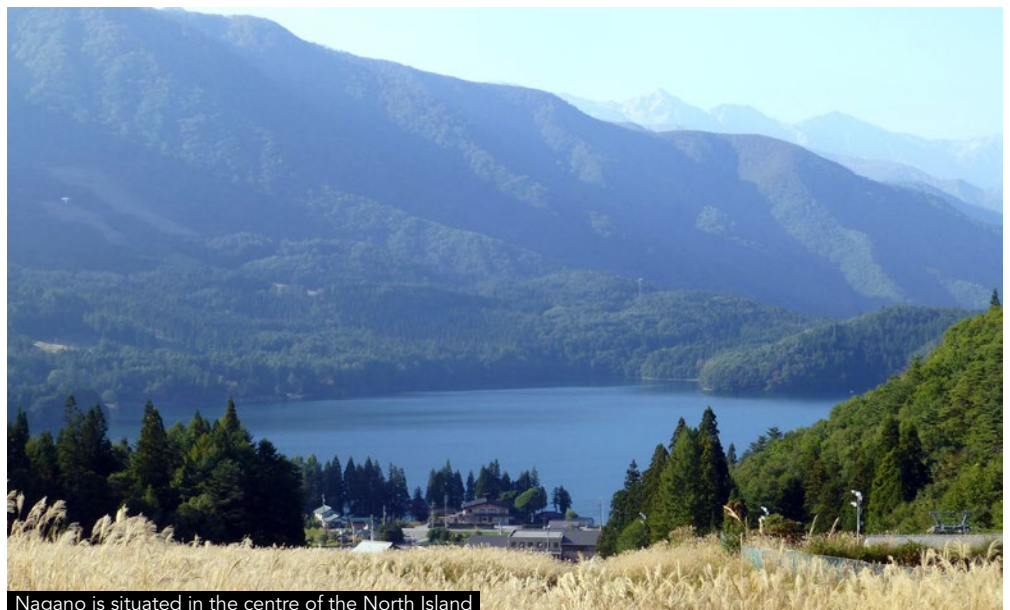
MOUNTAIN BIKING IN JAPAN



Words + Photos By: Sean James

So how did we end up in Japan in October with mountain bikes? The mystical land of the rising sun is not the first location that you would imagine choosing for a mountain bike vacation. After a week exploring Japan and its 6,852 separate islands, riding trails in the mountains around Nagano and exploring Tokyo, Japan is definitely one of my favourite places.

It's a long story but it's sufficient to say that we should have been riding the sandy mountain bike trails in Namibia; a hot desert country at the bottom of the African continent. As we stood for two hours in Dubai airport at the counter trying to help the poor attendant enter the correct codes to check us in, the computer continued to say 'no'. Eventually the plane with all its passengers departed for Cape Town and then on to Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. Our white flag had gone up a long time ago and by then we were slightly amused so it was not that much of a disappointment. We sat



Nagano is situated in the centre of the North Island

down with a coffee in the airport lounge to decide which destination to fly to. The airline had generously given us instant credit and as we had both taken the week off work and didn't fancy staying home in Dubai we had big decisions to make. Suddenly it dawned on us that neither of us had been to Japan. The flight was only eight hours and sounded pretty good. Visa on arrival was a bonus. During the second coffee, Booking.com had already found us a rustic guesthouse in the Japanese Alps, and by the end of the day we had touched down in the Far Eastern land of the mystical religions and raw fish.

I have heard nobody say anything bad about a visit to Japan and it really is an amazing place. Maybe it was the fact that The Michelin Guide has awarded Japanese cities more Michelin stars than the rest of the world combined that made Japan so appealing. However neither of us, both Englishmen from

up north, liked raw fish. Maybe it was the element of risk associated with Japan that attracted us. Japan is located in the "marketing friendly" area known as the Pacific Ring of Fire and is more prone to earthquakes and tsunamis than anywhere else on the planet. In fact Japan has the highest natural disaster risk in the developed world. Contrarily the residents seem to outlast the rest of the world and live the second average longest lives of any country in the world at 83½-years-old. Well yes the danger did appeal and maybe we wanted to get away from the safety of the UAE and live a bit on the edge.

Flying into Tokyo is like any other airport as you pass through customs and get a quick stamp in your passport. On the other side of the gate it's a different matter. Entering directly into the subway system we had our first lessons in the artistic, rather pretty but totally baffling Japanese language. You can't even

Trails around Nagano





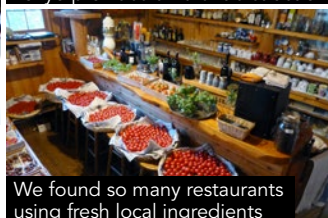
Tucking into mid ride lunch

guess what the words mean. Knowing a bit of French or Spanish or having studied Latin at school doesn't help here; and surprisingly not many people speak English here. However they try so hard and you feel they really want to help. Luckily the Japanese are pretty good at technology and an App for the phone gave us the train and metro connections we needed. Three changes later we were across one of the biggest cities in the world and waiting for our bus to take us northwest across Japan to Nagano.

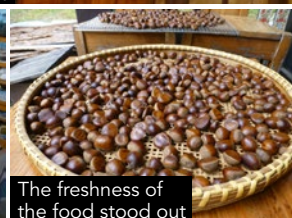
Pulling our bike cases out of the bus in Nagano we could sense the mountains and smell the clean air around us. Already we were at 800m above sea level, in the Fall and with clothes selected for an African Spring. We had chosen our guest house as the remoteness and wilderness appealed to us. It was located even further into the mountains. Our next bus was even smaller and the roads were becoming windier as we climbed towards our final destination of Hakuba. Somehow our host was waiting for us even though we had not informed him of our arrival time. We were the only ones to get off at the ski resort of Hakuba and a very polite elderly gentleman bowed and transported us even further into the Japanese landscape. It was exactly what we wanted. The house was



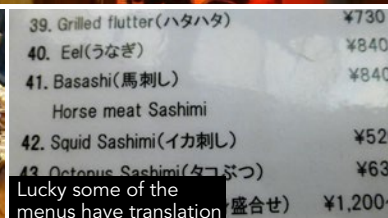
Tokyo provides different distractions



We found so many restaurants using fresh local ingredients



The freshness of the food stood out



charming. Situated amongst a multicoloured forest of trees, leaves on the ground, out-houses full of old machinery, beech nuts drying on the wooden porch and no sign of any neighbours. Inside the house was typically Japanese with the obligatory state of the art toilet, sliding wall partitions, raised wooden floors, massive steam room and hot tub with the entire family fussing around us.

We all have preconceptions and images of Japan in our minds but the place is not how you expect it. Approximately 73 per cent of Japan is forested and mountainous and therefore unsuitable for agriculture, industrial or residential use. People therefore don't live in these areas. Not something we expected in one of the most densely populated countries in the world but an added bonus for us. Most people live around the coast so naturally these areas are bustling and more

typical of how you imagine Japanese life.

The major cities are connected by a modern and efficient system of toll roads, however only 50 per cent of all the distance traveled in Japan is by car. This is the lowest of all the G8 countries and as the Mayor of Bogota, Enrique Peñalosa stated "An advanced state is not a place where the poor move about in cars, rather it's where the rich use public transportation". It seems Japan is sensitive to issues on a global scale and even more so since 2011.

The area around Nagano is famous for being the southernmost host of the Winter Olympics. It also has Zenkō-ji, a seventh century Buddhist temple. A million tourists visit Nagano annually for a variety of activities.

We unpacked, assembled our bikes in the yard and rode off up the mountain on the first road we saw. An hour later we had pedalled

Snow in October



Our amazing guest house in the Japanese Alps

up to 1,500m and with the rain and hail stinging our soft Middle Eastern limbs we shivered our way back to the lodge. It was the coldest either of us had ever been and a lesson for mountain bikers who leave the shores of the UAE to be more prepared. Too accustomed had we become to simply ride off for a day on the trails with some energy gels and a 100 dirham note. Defrosting in the steam baths of the guest house became a welcome reward at the end of our rides.

As much as this article should be about mountain biking and advice on how to organise a trip to Japan, the culture and experience of being in Japan dominates any attempts at trying to describe the trails and rides. Many things stand out as evocative of Japan and will always be associated with the trip; the freshness of the air, the bright colours, heavily featured architecture and the gentleness of the people. Japanese culture revolves around a number of things and its cuisine is known for its emphasis on seasonality of food, quality of ingredients and presentation. Our favorite restaurant soon became the pizza restaurant with its herbs, tomatoes and chilies drying fragrantly, waiting for the ski season to start up again. It was round the wood burning stove eating cheesecake and pizza, that we discovered the reason for our drenching earlier in the day. According to the guidebook, "In late summer and early autumn, typhoons often bring heavy rain." It was October.

Most of each year's 10 million foreign tourists to Japan are from South Korea, Taiwan and China. There is so much to see here but we only had a week to cram it all in. We would try to ride and run every day at the same time as seeing as much as possible. Putting your toes in different seas or oceans is a worthy tourist pastime, so the second day, a Sunday, we checked the map and headed out towards the west coast and the Sea of Japan. It looked all downhill on the map and indeed it was. The only thing we didn't spot were the tunnels. Kilometres and kilometres of them with no bike tracks. 50km away was the seaside resort of Itoigawa and we arrived in the middle of a weekend street festival. Clad in lycra, we wandered into a local restaurant and sat down for Sunday lunch alongside the Japanese families. As we looked out across the sea we imagined Russia and China only a short distance away it looked cold, grey and forbidding.

The characters that make up Japan's name mean "sun-origin", which is why Japan is



Typical Japanese scenery

often referred to as the "Land of the Rising Sun". The climate of Japan is predominantly temperate, but the variation from north to south is dramatic. This influences the type of wildlife and flora that can be found. In the north there are coniferous forests while in the Ryukyu and Bonin Islands, subtropical moist broadleaf forests abound. The next day we were climbing steadily up a pass and saw a sign for bears, but unfortunately no real ones. Grabbing a selfie with a panda munching on bamboo would have been the ultimate. Back in front of the log burning stove later that night we discovered that there are over 90,000 species of wildlife, including the brown bear, the Japanese macaque, the Japanese raccoon dog, and the Japanese giant salamander. To protect these natural resources Japan has a system of National Parks and has four sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List for their outstanding natural value. Included on the list, at least in part, must be some of Japan's 1-8 active volcanoes.

The mystique of Japan is continued today with the presence of an Emperor although his powers are very limited and the country is ruled by a Prime Minister and an elected committee known as the Diet. The spectacular economic growth rates of the 1960s to 80s have not returned although some features such as keiretsu in which business enterprises are influential in personal life and lifetime employment is key are still common in the work workplace.

Japan is often considered expensive but after visiting places recently such as the UK

and Europe and having lived in the UAE for a number of years, the prices were not exorbitant. Although Japan is still the third largest economy in the world in terms of GDP there are still problems within.

So we spent an enjoyable few days riding the Japanese Alps, rushing past Buddhist and Shinto inspired architecture before heading back to the big city.

The latter part of our week was spent in Tokyo; again not as expensive as we imagined and easier to navigate than first thought. Tokyo is vibrant and welcoming and there is no sign of recession here. The centre is full of people working and enjoying themselves. Enjoying yourself here often means drinking yourself into a stupor, falling asleep at the bar, waking up and continuing to imbibe. Restaurants and bars are packed and the variety is refreshing coming from Dubai where the format can be sterile, uniform and quite stereotypical. We tried not to forget that we were on a training week and although not really possible to ride mountain bikes off-road in Tokyo, we tried to embrace the Japanese passion for exercise, and in particular marathon running. Keen to complete 100km running in our week here in addition to the mountain biking we had some pavements to pound. The monsoon had followed us from the mountains and so out into the downpour we headed to run laps around the magnificent historical monuments such as the Imperial Palace, the museums and the street markets.

Our penultimate day in Japan was my birthday so to celebrate we downloaded the Tokyo marathon course onto GPS and decided to run it for fun. Usually big city major marathons take you through the best parts of town, looking to showcase their best attractions. The Tokyo marathon is a great course even if we had to dodge the shoppers and cars, which are not normally there for the actual February event. The evening was given up to testing the many forms of sake, both hot and cold followed by various Japanese hops, whilst sitting next to Japanese executives who keep slipping in and out of consciousness. We returned home to Dubai more than happy with a whistle stop tour of Japan on our mountain bikes, our only wish that we could have spent more time there.

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DXB Terminal 2: NOW DOING TIME TRAVEL

Words + Photos By: Andy McNab
Additional Photos By: Ecotours and Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan. Enormous, landlocked and worth a whole load of points in a Scrabble game (well actually no it isn't, as it is invalid).

I made a trip there during the summer, and certainly in my 20 years of indie travel experience it was, once slightly off the beaten track, the most isolated and 'off the grid and back to nature' place I have encountered or could even have imagined.

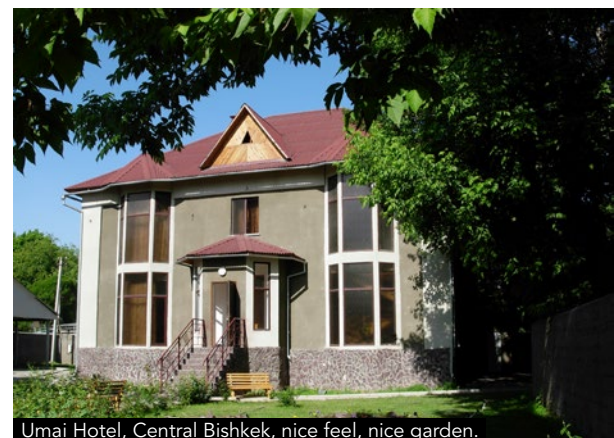
Rewind 300 years and what is missing from our lives? Cellular communications for a start. The sound of combustion engines. The sight of planes overhead. The smell of exhaust fumes and pollution. All these things (and so many more) were also blissfully missing from this little slice of pre-industrial nirvana – Temir-Kanat. "So!" I hear you all cry out. "How did you check your WhatsApp groups, email, home news, Premiership transfers?" I didn't. "How did you get around the place?" Erm, by walking or horseback. "Did you think it was strange never to see a plane in the sky?" Yes, actu-

ally, that was a bit weird.

Let me give you the lowdown on your detox from modern life. It all starts in Terminal 2 of DXB, Fly Dubai have a flight out to Bishkek on Friday and Sunday. Buying a return ticket, you will probably get some change out of 2,000 AED. Pre-book your accommodation and try to have some idea of where it is you are aiming for because navigating the capital was a complete nightmare. I guess the larger hotels less so, but I was staying in a small 'Eco Guesthouse' and it was a real three-hour mission to taxi it. Despite having directions, names, street numbers, phone numbers, fax numbers and email addresses. It was a tough one. However, once there, the Umai Hotel was pleasant, functional and quiet-ish (next door's dog was pretty 'excitable' around the clock).

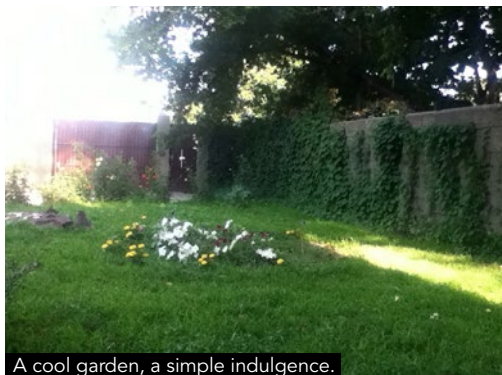
City Centre Bishkek was a straightforward 25 minute walk, which was fine in the daytime, but at night, with frequent and prolonged power cuts and potholes that could easily swallow a leg up to its knee, you'd either need nerves of steel, night vision goggles or a very decent torch. I travelled alone so, was okay, maybe with a family, different story. There were taxis available, but they looked at least as dangerous as the pitch-black walk. I popped into Hyatt Regency, as was en route in and out of town, and can confirm, if five-star is your thing, you'd do okay here. Providing you have stuffed USD into every available crack and crevice you possess. Bishkek, although a little rough around the edges was fine – a bit grey, lots of 60's and 70's concrete, little bit less shiny and new than Dubai, however, it did come equipped with plenty of green spaces and pleasant small municipal parks and decent open air, street corner watering holes.

The big selling point for the Umai Hotel, was not the comfort or friendliness of staff or the breakfasts and snacks, which were all



Umai Hotel, Central Bishkek, nice feel, nice garden.

just fine. The big sell was the large meadow grass garden; which, when next door's hound eventually got around to snoozing, was the perfect cool, shaded, scented garden to relax in with a book and a cold one. Occasionally taking a break to look more closely at the never-ending parade of bugs and crawlies. It was fantastic just to throw down a rug, grab a bottle opener and doze between chapters of a book. Anyway, you know what I mean. It was a holiday in itself – which is more than can be said for my transit



A cool garden, a simple indulgence.



The criss-cross of 'yurt poles' is reflected in Kyrgyzstan's national flag

between the capital and my Ecotour no-madic experience – a traditional Kyrgyz yurt tucked away in the foothills of the Terskey-Alatau Mountains. The A365 wasn't exactly a road less traveled, it was pretty busy on the day I made the six-hour commute; and if you have even wondered what happened to all the battered and bruised cars from the 80's that once graced the dead-straight autobahns of Germany, wide-open boulevards of Paris and gridlocked streets of London, then wonder no more – they are kept alive, by any means available in this in this central Asian giant.

So what of the Yurt camp, firstly it was reached by horseback (which I wasn't expecting, nor too was the poor horse that I was allocated). There is a point at which the car lift can no longer continue, and a quick shrill whistle up the valley brought a couple of expert Kyrgyz riders and a rather harassed looking pony in tow. They approached surfing the horses' backs rather than sitting in a non-existent saddle. I looked apologetically at the horse who quietly succumbed to my slapstick attempts to mount. I did feel the need to point out to the two accompanying horsemen that I had in fact never ridden a horse before, period. As you may expect there was something lost in translation and the elder of two riders lashed his crop across the poor pony's nose. "Owl!" The horse didn't even flinch. With me finally on board we made slow, stumbling progress up the loose gravel mountain track, despite the two riders taking it in turns to flog my beleaguered nag.

It did cross my mind as I lolled from side to side hanging on to the horse's thick mane, that it would have been at least twice as quick for me to walk, and also I had some doubts that my basic medical insurance package would cover me for falling off a horse onto a boulder-strewn mountain path and breaking a collar bone, elbow, wrist or combination of the three. It also crossed my mind that even if I did fall and break something that required patching up, the nearest decent hospital was probably six hours away in the direction from which I had just arrived. Good sense got the better of me and I ended the approach stumbling alongside the pony leading him/her by his/her nose ring.

The Yurt was basic, functional and musty; however, there were no complaints, it was overly spacious for one and the setting could not be faulted. It was perched on a small plateau with a quite incredible view over the inland sea (massive lake) Ysyk-Köl. There was a crystal clear mountain stream on my 'doorstep' (which was used for everything water-based in the camp), we were



Yurt Camp at Temir-Kanat

surrounded by gently sloping horse/grazing paddocks and small hilly outcrops and for the next few days I was free to roam; to take a horse or the camp puppy, 'Tyson' – a name that I found quite at odds with the natural beauty and sense of absolute simplicity that envelops the mountain yurt experience. One thing that stood out as a really pleasant and unexpected surprise, was that the slopes around the camp were bursting with life. The entire area was carpeted with tiny alpine flowers, just like Austria or Switzerland. It was the nicest thing in the world just to walk and rest, and walk and rest. The camp comprised of four yurts, one used by the friendly host family and the others housed travelers. All were outdoor enthusiasts, one yurt was occupied by an elderly Dutch walking group who were using it as a base for three weeks of guided walks and horse treks; the second remaining yurt was home to a Dutch family who were taking a year out from the 'real world' and traveling with their young family.

Although Kyrgyzstan is well and truly on the outdoor enthusiast map and the entire mountain region I criss-crossed with hundreds of trails of one sort or another, it still has the feel of being a virgin territory. The landscapes and horizons are epic and although it does not really do my statement any justice, they reminded me of the cinematic shots of the windswept American prairies that reoccur in so many frontier films.

Being so far removed from city-life – although the shores of Ysyk-Köl (about 40km away from camp) are developed for mass-tourism – the night sky is one that must be witness to be believed. Pitch black and dotted by millions of celestial pinpricks. A roaring campfire, 0°C, fire-water in your belly and the heavens. What is there not to love? Sometimes modern life just needs to be put on to the back burner and forgotten about.

The visit to the mountains was too short and I have (as I have done so many times before) vowed to return. Certainly a return trip is foremost in my mind right now, although I think a return visit to the mountains in the depths of winter would be a very stark contrast to my August adventure. The average temperature there in January is definitely well into the blue around the clock.

KYRGYZSTAN CHECK LIST

Central Bishkek – little ragged, but, fun, friendly and relatively 'easy' in the daytime. (Very little English spoken).

Ecotours – helpful, professional connected and multilingual.

Temir-Kanat (Yurt Camp) – peace, quiet, freedom (very little anything spoken)



Mountain pastures



The vastness of the landscape.
Rain shadow in the distance



TRAVEL + ADVENTURE

EIGERWAND

Words By: Sean James

Photos By: Sean James and Dave Gladwin

Many years ago I tried to climb the North Face of the Eiger. Not once but twice. We were young and impetuous. Really we were sports climbers.

More accustomed to racing up to Yorkshire at the weekend in fast cars, throwing our ropes down on blankets, racking the quick draws and throwing ourselves at, and off, the steep 30m limestone routes before falling safely onto the bolts. We had employed the same technique in Scotland on the hard, technical mixed winter climbs. Driving up the M6 on a Friday night not arriving until 2:00 a.m. in the morning. At 6:00 a.m. we would race up to the corries to be the first in line on rock that was barely covered in ice. We would do two long routes and then drive all the way back to Sheffield. We thought we could do the same with the Eiger. The individual grades of each pitch on the classic 1938 North Face route didn't scare us. They weren't that hard. We had been training indoors on steep plastic holds [artificial rock/boulder faces] and we had the guns. For us, there would be no waiting around for the perfect conditions or siege style attempts. The drive to Switzerland was a bit further but with two of us in a company BMW we still managed door to door from Sheffield in about 10 hours. That included a crossing of the English

Channel by train and then 1,300km through Europe on the high-speed toll roads. We would claim the summit then whizz all the way back home. Done in a week or so. Or so we thought.

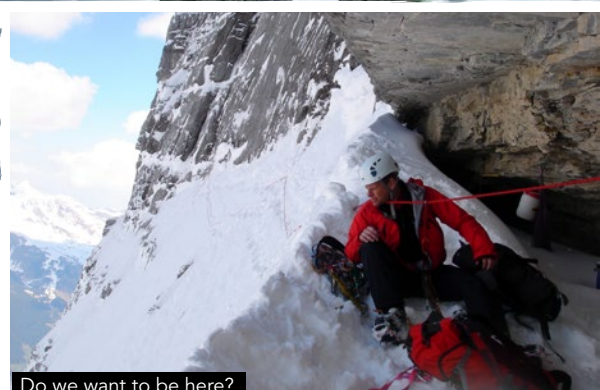
THE WEATHER

The first time we went of course the weather was too hot, add to that I dropped my helmet as we geared up which rolled out of sight never to be seen again. Snow and ice had turned to slush and hard, sharp, noisy rocks constantly whistled down around our heads. Disregarding the weather, we pressed on. The North Face was surprisingly full of old ropes and the remains of previous ascents. Looking back we should have pulled on the many fixed ropes that would have made things easier. Nobody was judging our style. As a result, by the end of the first day we had had enough. We abseiled back down to the Stollenloch window, rucksacks still full of food and gas and descended the train track that is on the inside of the mountain. First attempt and failure. The second time it never stopped snowing and we got caught in an avalanche on the way to the start of the route and partner took a tumble and twisted his ankle before even getting the ropes out of the rucksack.

So why, almost a decade older and wiser and sitting at a basecamp in the Himalaya, does the Eiger sit at the front of my mind? Simple, I was thinking what I could climb next; the 'Eigerwand' starts to call. On an expedition that lasts six weeks you have a lot of time to think. The actual climbing only takes a very short time, but sitting in a tent takes a lot of time. I had just led a successful expedition to the summit of the sixth highest mountain in the world, Cho Oyu. I was however deeply disappointed and not satisfied. Climbing the normal route of an 8,000m peak on oxygen in good weather was not really a challenge. In fact it did not even feel like mountaineering. I was dismayed at the number of zombie-like climbers around me being pushed and prodded by their Sherpas on summit day. My mind searched for something to cleanse this feeling and to become pure again – just two climbers bound together by a rope. I wanted to rid myself of the lines of down clad, overfed corporate egos, who seemed more inter-



Finally the summit



Do we want to be here?

ested in whether their sponsors' badges were straight for photos or how long their next motivational speech should last. For them preparation for an 8,000m peak involved finding a flight or boot sponsor rather than working on fitness, technique or selecting the correct equipment – these people would not even attempt to do the Eiger.

By climbing the Eiger I hoped to find redemption as a true climber. Yes it is possible to climb it with a guide, but you still require some level of competence. It seems nowadays 8,000m climbers don't even put their own crampons on, and get anxious when they can't complete their daily blogs because the internet is down. On trips I have seen clients screaming and shouting that they couldn't tighten their harness because it was too difficult to bend to see it over the bulk of the down suit – of course a Sherpa comes running to the rescue. I wanted to be back among climbers rather than what I felt expedition climbing had become.

THE HISTORY

The first ascent of the Eiger was on August 11, 1858. No one remembers that occasion and the poor ascentionists, an Irishman named Charles Barrington with Grindelwald guides Christian Almer and Peter Bohren are lost in history. They climbed the West Flank route. The West Flank is considerably easier than any route on the North Face, but is still a very complex route – and more so back in 1858. In comparison, it is of similar difficulty as the Hörnli Arête on the Matterhorn with



Summer meadows Eiger Mönch and Jungfrau



Preparing kit in Grindelwald



The viewing platform

rock pitches up to III and ice to 40 degrees. What people do remember however, is the first ascent of The North Face of the Eiger. To give you an idea of the difficulty of the North Face, there was no guided British ascent until 2007. That means if you wanted to climb it, you had to do it yourself.

If you ask any climber which climb they would like on their CV many will give the same response. Many might consider Everest but then decide against it as they know it is really just a glorified trekking peak, where success is enabled mostly by fixed lines, oxygen and Sherpas. Some might think of K2 but quickly put that thought aside. Too dangerous, too far away, and with only about 300 people ever having reached the top and many not returning, the list for K2 is short. What will be on most people's list is the Eiger, and more specifically its North Face. Its reputation is fearsome and its legend huge. Even though the Eiger is right in the middle of Europe and you can get a Swiss train to the foot of the climb, the statistics are not good. People gaze at it whilst drinking coffee and lunchtime refreshments during their skiing. It is accessible. A short but expensive train ride to a fancy hotel at Kleine Scheidegg and you are within reach of the start. There are even webcams that you can peer at online to check the conditions.

The Eiger has many names. Literally translated it means "Ogre". A fitting title for such a gruesome, horrific beast. Mordwand, a humorous derivation of Nordwand (German for North Face) is another and mean "murderous wall". The Eiger North Face was first climbed by Heinrich Harrer, an Austrian in 1938. The history of attempts is well documented, and since then over 70 people have died trying. The summit is less than 4,000m so like another illustrious mountain K2 it is not the highest but still carries huge respect. In summer the meadows at its base are full of hikers, cows and green grass. In winter snow fields and deep snow are de rigueur.

Before Harrer's successful attempt, like most things, the British has conquered nearly everything they wanted in the world. This included pioneering new routes in the Alps. The Victorians had a thirst for anything new. However, around the early part of the Twentieth Century they started to turn their attention to the bigger mountains of the Himalaya and Everest, and left the North Face unconquered. The power of the nations in Europe was shifting and the talented, technically gifted Alpinists from Italy, Germany and Austria turned their attention to the remaining routes in Europe; routes which were also the most difficult and highly prized.

First ascents of mountains are always

associated with sentiments of nationalism and pride, and back in the 1930s there was rumour that Harrer climbed the Eiger with a Nazi flag in his backpack – which further added to the legend. After the ascent he was rushed to an audience with Hitler in the Munich Olympic Stadium. A huge accolade for a climb in the Alps that was not even the first ascent of the summit.

DIFFICULTIES

So why is the North Face so difficult and notorious? Many, like us, are lured into it by the green meadows and pretty Swiss village at the bottom. However there are a number of factors that combine to repel eager mountaineers. The North Face is in perpetual shadow. This could be a good thing to help the ice freeze and become more solid but it also results in extremely low temperatures which make sleeping, climbing and simply surviving very difficult. The patches of the climb that the sun does touch are at the top of the wall. This only results in thawing and rock fall and ice constantly tumble down, making climbers feel like skittles. In addition, the different bands of rock that were created many years ago when the Eiger was formed are still loose and fragile. They are often angled the wrong way and resist attempts to put protection in. Many have been scared by the size of the run outs on each pitch which would result in long falls if mistakes are made.

Many stories have been told of the Eiger. The names of each pitch have been written into history along with all those who have tested themselves. Who hasn't heard of Mehringer, Sedlmeyer, Kurz, Heckmair, The Hinterstoisser Traverse, The Stollenloch, The Flat Iron, Death Bivouac, The Traverse of the Gods, The White Spider? The North Face of the Eiger is a public arena where the mountaineering has become a theatre. It is a testing ground and people are attracted to it because of this reputation. As you climb the Eiger you are acutely aware of everything that has happened. Each pitch has a history. Not only is the Eiger often shrouded in cloud but also in legend and lore. Although one time we escaped by abseiling through the viewing window we were aware of dramas that had happened here. In an early attempt a climber had frozen to death attempting the same escape. The rescuers were only 40m away but unable to reach or help him. He died hanging on the rope. The body left there for a number of days in full view of the village. Many of the early attempts were doomed in this way. The audience and press below have witnessed numerous deaths. There are frequent occasions when storms have kept climbers literally frozen to the wall, unable to move up or down while those watching could do nothing.

Another reason why the North Face of the Eiger is particularly notorious is its geographical position: situated on the edge of the Alps, it is subject to instant storms. Any weather front approaching from the northwest will smash into the Eiger first with instant fury, and often without warning; and the concave shape of the face helps trap, hold and intensify any bad weather. "Hollowed out like a sick man's chest," it retains storms much longer than normal.



One of many gulleys on the hard Exit Cracks

The route itself winds and twists around overhangs and ledges. There are countless traverses. If you decide you want to leave, abseiling straight down the same way you came up is just not possible. We made a decision early to leave when we saw the Stollenloch window. If the option hadn't been there, maybe we would have carried on.

So what lessons did I learn? Patience and the weather are key to success on the Eiger. Attempting it in anything other than perfect conditions will nearly always result in failure. After bad weather e.g. snow there must be a period of stabilisation. Even when the weather is good, the Eiger needs a few days to shed the snow that has accumulated. You may be waiting, drinking lattes and watching, eager to go. Wait a bit longer and you may be rewarded. Clear, cold weather for at least a few days is necessary to freeze the snow in place. During the day, temperatures will rise and avalanches of snow will pour off, cleansing the face. This is not the time to be writing history.

THE FUTURE

Some may say that new technology, more reliable weather forecasts and better equipment have made the climb slightly easier. Admittedly there are now ascents in the depth of winter, Eric Jones has soloed it, Uli Steck has done it in about three hours and others base jump off it. What has not changed is that it is still a test of self-belief. You don't approach the Eiger North Face the same way as you do something like Everest. Has the Eiger North Face ever seen 234 people on its summit in one day as happened in 2012 on Everest? I don't think it ever will.

The first thing I did when I got back to Kathmandu was scratch the itch and email my long time climbing partner. There are only a few people I would want to climb something like this with. I had spent most of my climbing career with him. The last time we climbed together was probably 10 years ago. We did our first 8b+ together. This year he's just turned 50 and "retired", to concentrate on his personal goals and climbing for a year. Ditto. We talked about our plans and tick lists for the coming year. His made mine look pitiful. "Yes," came the reply, "I'm already planning a quick attack on the Eiger in March. Plan to drive down there for a few days. Want to come?" Nothing changes.

Hanging out at death bivy



TRAVEL + ADVENTURE

The Honey Badger

Episode 8: Mozambique Part 2

DIARIES

Destination:

Ilha de Mozambique and Gorongosa

We had a long drive to Mozambique Island (Ilha de Mozambique) from Pemba and were ready to relax on the beach when we arrived. Mira, now quite the camping chef, set about the barbeque making T-bone steaks, mashed potatoes and salad whilst James investigated the shisha situation.

Ilha de Mozambique is a UNESCO world heritage site and was the capital of Mozambique for nearly four centuries under the Portuguese before the capital was moved to Maputo. It was also used as a major base for the Arab slave traders long before the Portuguese arrived. The island is connected to the mainland by a narrow bridge which was paid for by severely taxing the local population over several decades. Arriving on the island feels like entering a historical wonderland. The beautifully colourful buildings are slowly deteriorating, but this adds to the quaint atmosphere of the island. We were sorry to only be there for a day.

Gorongosa was our next stop. We were looking forward to a self-drive safari but discovered that personal cars are now banned to protect tourists from the aggressive elephants. Gorongosa was used as a military base during the last civil war and most of the animals were poached for either meat to feed the army, or to sell ivory and other valuable items. In 2001 they established it as a national park, but many of the elephants are still extremely sensitive to humans and can be very aggressive. Nevertheless, we had a reasonable game drive and stayed in a protected campsite full of vervet monkeys, baboons and warthogs. We had lunch by the pool feeding monkeys – something that we shouldn't do, but couldn't resist just this once.



Jump if you love bananas

In the afternoon we looked for a lodge in Inchope to avoid paying the park fees for a second day. The only accommodation that had been recommended was a very odd, slightly derelict fairground/zoo of sorts. It had everything from unhappy crocodiles to mini ambulance rickshaws sponsored by Dubai Expo 2020. A brief tour of the cockroach-filled accommodation from a lice-infested gentleman made the decision to move on fairly easy. We quickly discovered that Inchope was little more than a truck stop and the first place we checked was probably the best. It was getting dark, and then the leaf spring shackles failed on us again. We could barely drive and were entering the only 'no go' area shown on the Foreign Common Wealth Office website. We made the decision to drive off the track and find a quiet spot to settle for the night. Those who are familiar with overlanding in Mozambique will know that a quiet spot is almost impossible to find, so we stopped at a hut and asked the elderly gentleman inside if we could spend the night close to their village.



"I surrender!"

Joseph and his family welcomed us with open arms. His daughters, Phelimina, Loda and Sofia were very curious, but far too shy to come anywhere near us that night.

As soon as we set up camp, James got to work on the leaf spring shackles which were falling apart, again. Mira stood by with the essential grape and shisha. Within a few minutes we noticed an unusual amount of large insects. Some enormous ticks had also made it into the car and we quickly became surrounded by centipedes and spiders. A tarpaulin on the floor allowed James to continue working, but not before covering himself with Deet and tucking his socks into his trousers.

The next morning we woke up thankful for having a tick-free roof tent and Joseph met us with a plate full of bananas for breakfast and a few cassavas to eat later. His daughters soon overcame their shyness and we gave them a skipping rope to play with. We were given a tour of the house and farm and Joseph asked if we wanted to buy any more bananas. We were glad he asked because we were not sure how to thank him for his wonderful hospitality so we bought an enormous bunch. We deliberately overpaid with about 33 USD. After initially refusing to accept, we saw tears come to his eyes as he explained that he believed God had sent us and that this would pay for his daughters' schooling and allow him to buy meat and sugar for the family.

It's a dog's life



No such thing as bad advertising



Ilha de Mozambique, UNESCO World Heritage site



Approach with caution

A key part of Mira and James' trip is fundraising and volunteer work and they are currently teaching nursery school children in Zanzibar. If you are interested in helping them to achieve their target and make a difference to African communities and wildlife, please spread the word or donate using the following links:

To donate: www.gofundme.com/thehoneybadgerdiaries

If you would like to follow their journey through Africa and see more photos, recordings and videos:

Website: www.thehoneybadgerdiaries.com
Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pages/Honey-Badger-Diaries
Instagram: [@thehoneybadgerdiaries](https://www.instagram.com/thehoneybadgerdiaries)

HABITUALLY HEALTHY

Words and Recipe By: Chef Christopher Zerbe

Happy New Year! Another trip around the sun and we are all making the conscious decision to start eating healthier, start working out more and perhaps join that new gym hoping that we'll be motivated to go more often. Yet, does it ever really work? If it did, you probably wouldn't be trying to do it all over again. Why is it so hard to stick to a plan? Why is it so hard to eat healthy all the time, or go to the gym regularly? Could it be due to cost? What about injuries? Or, how about lack of time?

really cost all that much more than the alternative. However, the convenience factor usually takes precedence over everything. It is so much easier just to make a quick stop into one of the myriad of fast food joints scattered all over the city, or next to your office. Besides, who packs a lunch? Maybe there is no refrigerator at work? Maybe your lunch box just isn't cool enough? LOL, seriously, we come up with tons of excuses as to why we cannot feed ourselves as grown-ups. So how do we break that cycle? Will it take a miracle? Will it require Zen-like patience? Will it require a ton of money?

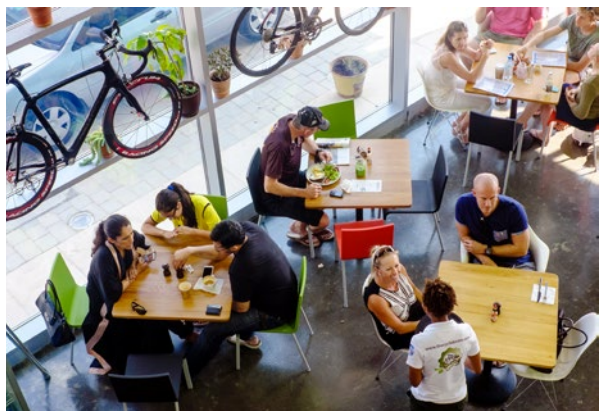
I believe that it all starts with the decision to be better, to eat better, to live better. This merely requires a bit of patience, a set of obtainable goals, a wee bit of guidance and encouragement along the way and a sense of conviction for what you are trying to achieve.

Just like in school when you strove to get

good grades by allocating time to study or when you played sports and you went to practice three times a week, this is no different! Theoretically, this should make it easier as you already know how to apply yourself this way. Becoming fitter and healthier while living here in Dubai has never been easier.

There must be hundreds of gyms, tons of outdoor activities and plenty of healthy eateries and groceries here. This past year saw more growth in the health and fitness realm than I have ever witnessed anywhere. It's fantastic! So to keep it simple, dedicate some time each

day to exercise for at least 20 minutes instead of watching that TV episode. Try for one month to make your own dinner instead of ordering takeaway. Use your leftovers to create simple, tasty and healthy packed lunches for work. Reward yourself once a week with a tasty treat. Get outdoors and soak up a bit of sunshine and vitamin D every day. Try picking up a new hobby in the way of a sport, like paddle boarding or surfing or even desert trekking. It's not complicated. Keep it simple and remember



For the majority of people like you and I, it's usually a combination of all of them. I know that for myself, over the last year alone I have definitely struggled with all of those things. The funny thing is that 99% of the time, we only have ourselves to blame. Out of the 24 hours we have in a day, only eight to 12 of those hours are spent working or at work, another eight hours of sleep (if you're lucky!) that leaves at least four hours left over to manage everything else including exercise.

Contrary to belief, eating healthy doesn't



to laugh a bit more, keep a positive outlook and stick with your goals. There's only 300-odd days left in this new trip around the sun, make the most of it!



The Cycle Bistro

GPS location:

Latitude: N 25° 02.792

Longitude: E 055° 14.384

Phone: 04 425 6555

Reebok  CrossFit

 LifeSpark

Thriving!



LIFESTYLE

Au Natural:

How to lead a healthier outdoor life

Sun exposure, vitamin D and some natural alternatives for sun care and burns

Words + Photos By: Ivana Chiles

Even though it is winter here in the UAE, time spent outdoors can still cause damage to your body; last month in OutdoorUAE we looked at how to hydrate and nourish yourself more naturally on your outdoor adventures, today we will look at sun exposure: how to protect yourself, how to choose the best products and what to do when you do get burnt.

If you are physically active and spend time outdoors, you are certainly aware that in addition to the pleasure of increased endorphin levels and a beautiful tan, prolonged exposure in the sun may result in some bothersome and painful consequences including sunburn.

Wavelengths, vitamins and exposure time

Exposure to the sun is important

Spending time outdoors and in the sun is important for us – besides its therapeutic qualities, safe sun exposure allows your skin to produce vitamin D, which is an absolutely crucial steroid hormone that is present in almost every single cell of our body.

It sounds illogical that in the UAE, a country with year-round sunshine, 78% of the population suffers from vitamin D deficiency. Doctors say that the results are not surprising, as most people don't even get outside during the day. The high prevalence of vitamin D deficiency is a result of an indoor lifestyle, the type of clothes we wear and the fact that our diet is not balanced. To make up for this we then rush, once in a while, to the beach to catch up on some sun, when it is too late.

Wavelengths

It is important to note, that the ultraviolet light from the sun comes in two wavelengths:

- Ultraviolet A (UVA), which is considered unhealthy, penetrates deeper into your skin resulting in free radical damage and can be the cause of various cancers. Ironically, bad UVA is available all hours of the day throughout the year.
- Ultraviolet B (UVB), is the healthy wavelength that helps produce vitamin D. Unlike UVA, good UVB rays are high at midday, when unfortunately most of the health experts recommend to avoid the sun ex-



Ivana enjoys the winter sunshine in Oman

posure. UVB rays get partially blocked by clouds, sand, air pollution, seasons (watch out for summer sun!), the time of the day and clothing.

Vitamin D

Normally, the human body produces vitamin D when the skin is exposed to sunlight. When UVB hits the surface of your skin, your skin converts a certain cholesterol derivative into vitamin D3. Vitamin D is responsible for maintaining a strong immune system, keeping teeth, bones and muscles strong and healthy (vitamin D helps to absorb calcium from the diet), supports cardiovascular health, improves mood and energy levels, synchronises circadian rhythm... and that is to name but a few benefits. Its lack can result in some serious health issues.

Tips to achieve an adequate and safe sun exposure:

Unfortunately, instead of taking advantage of the sun and its free health benefits, many health care and skincare practitioners warn us to stay away from it completely.

However sun can be safely enjoyed when simple precautions are followed:

- You should expose at least 40% of your body for approximately 20-30 minutes a day depending on your skin type. People with lighter complexion have a lower concentration of melanin in their skin (they get burnt faster) compared to those with darker skin tones. However, people with darker skin are more likely to become D vitamin deficient, because the melanin reduces the skin's ability to make the vitamin D in response to sunlight exposure. As a rule you should be exposing larger parts of your skin like arms, legs, back etc until your skin turns slightly pink. At this point, you have reached a saturation point, when your body will stop producing more vitamin D.

Your body has an automatic cut-off and your body will stop producing vitamin D when it has reached the equilibrium, so you can never overdose yourself! There is no additional benefit to staying in the sun for longer, because by now you are only increasing your chances of getting burnt.

- Before going out in the sun, protect yourself by moisturising your skin with organic coconut oil. By using sunscreens, you will block the good UVB rays therefore your body will actually stop producing vitamin D!

If you are not a fan of coconut oil, you can use calendula, sunflower, jojoba or shea butter as alternatives. Some of these oils have SPF in them already, for example carrot seed oil has SPF 25!

- Protect your eyes and face with sunglasses and cap. These are sensitive areas.
- Start off slowly by limiting your sun exposure to 10 to 15 minutes, especially in summer; and then gradually increase the time.
- Use only natural sunscreens, if you want to avoid burns and you are planning for a longer exposure. But remember, by using many sunscreens you are blocking yourself away from the nature!

Natural sunscreens



Sunscreen – a false barrier

Ensure your skin glows with health and vitality even on your outdoor adventures!

Wherever you go, you get confronted by a variety of sunscreen products with the most divine smells, which unfortunately do no good to you. Sunscreens effectively block UVB (the healthy wavelength), which is the main cause for sunburn, but they do not block cancer causing UVA! In reality it means, that if you apply high SPF, you will not burn, but you will still receive a high amount of UVA radiation. By applying a sunscreen, you are ignoring the fact, that your pink coloured skin is telling you that it has had enough of sun. Sunscreens create a false sense of security, that you can stay in the sun longer and you are safe!



Natural remedies for sunburn

Sunscreens are classified according to SPF (sun protection factor):

SPF 15- blocks up to 93 % of UVB radiation
 SPF 30- blocks up to 97 % of UVB radiation
 SPF 50- blocks up to 98 % of UVB radiation

The food you put in your body helps to create your blood and determines your health. Likewise what you put on your skin has an effect on you. Any skincare product is immediately absorbed through the largest organ of our body, your skin. Unlike food, there is no liver to filter the harmful substances. So watch out there! You should care about the products you are putting on your skin, know where they come from and how they have been made! The word 'natural' or 'organic' on the labels has lost its meaning – and does not mean that there are no harmful chemicals in the product. It can simply mean, that one of the oils used in the product is organically grown.

The general rule

If you find any of the below three ingredients on the label on your sunscreen, you are buying a product full of chemicals: parabens, petroleum and fragrance.

To sum it up, your sunscreen should be

fragrance free and the only active ingredients should be minerals, zinc and titanium because they do not get absorbed all the way to the cells. They only reflect the sun and provide natural protection.

Sunburn

Things do not always go the way we want and sunburn can happen to all of us, especially on long hikes in the mountains or whilst spending time on the sea. It is important to look at them seriously and avoid using harsh conventional creams and painkillers, which will only worsen the condition.

One of the best homemade natural remedies is fresh aloe vera gel directly spread over the affected area. I strongly encourage everyone to grow aloe in their garden or simply in a pot in the apartment. You can also enjoy it in your morning juices or smoothies. Just make sure your plant is at least two years old, if consuming internally and wait for about 20 minutes after you have cut the leaf off. You will first see a yellow sticky liquid coming from the cut, which is the plant's natural way of protecting itself.

Wash the yellow liquid off and then either squeeze the gel on the burn or simply apply the peeled leaf on the burn.



Grow your own Aloe Vera

Cucumbers provide an instant cooling effect. Simply slice the cucumber and apply on the wound. You can also grate it.

Calendula oil can be also used, it has healing and anti-inflammatory properties and works beautifully on burns.

Mash some strawberries and apply on a burn for few minutes, then wash off with cool water.

Coriander oil has a soothing effect when rubbed onto sunburn.

Honey has been used by ancient cultures as a topical salve for skin burns. Honey is full of enzymes, which work better than antibiotic creams, speed up healing and minimise pain.

Remember, always clean effected area with cold water, avoid using harsh soaps and drink plenty of water. Take care of your body, because it is the only one you have.

Have fun out there, enjoy the fabulous UAE winter and soak up the sun whilst having some great adventures!



Build your internal sunscreen shield:

Did you know you can build an internal sunscreen and protect yourself against the sunburn by saturating your cells with antioxidants? The more antioxidants you have, the less likely you are to get burnt. Some of the best examples would be astaxanthin (red pigment mostly found in marine life), betalains (found in beetroot), resveratrol (red grapes, berries) and lycopene (tomatoes, papaya, peppers). I recommend that you have a large glass of beetroot juice before heading out in the sun. It works, trust me!

Ivana Chiles has been living in the UAE for almost 15 years. Her passions are nutrition, healthy cooking and gardening. Ivana is a certified health coach, member of American Association of Drugless Practitioners and also a keen outdoor enthusiast.



Camping doesn't mean compromising on your health take fresh healthy products



DOUBLE SCOOP DELIGHT

Words By: Andy Whitaker

Having ridden quite a few different fat bikes over the last couple of years since the arrival of the first "Fatties" to the UAE, I welcomed the opportunity to test ride the new Silverback Double Scoop fat bike.

On paper it appears to be a very well spec'd bike for the price tag, with good mid level but perfectly capable Shimano hydraulic disc brakes; the absolutely necessary 100mm rims and 4.7" tyres for sand riding unless you weigh less than 50kg when the 4" tyres on an 80mm rim might be enough to keep you afloat on the sand, and I'm sure very few of us fit into that weight category. I know I certainly don't, and never will.

The bike is equipped with a tyre I've not had the opportunity to ride before, but I was suitably impressed with the Vee Tire Bulldozer as the tyre profile is much flatter than some other tyres I've ridden on and not as tall in profile, giving a bigger footprint at slightly higher pressures. And what's most important is the large footprint of a tyre to distribute the weight across the sand to avoid breaking the surface and losing forward momentum and therefore having ease of rolling over the sand.



The bike geometry is much more familiar to a mountain bike than my own Fattie and was very easy to jump from my mountain bike onto the Double Scoop and feel at home pretty much immediately. Being an alloy frame makes the bike surprisingly light too, the bike comes with a dual chainring upfront and a 10-speed rear, however I found it highly unlikely I'd ever use the large ring up front for pure desert riding. But if the bike was to be used for trail riding as well as a more multi-purpose bike it would serve well for that type of riding, and therefore

more of a personal preference really.

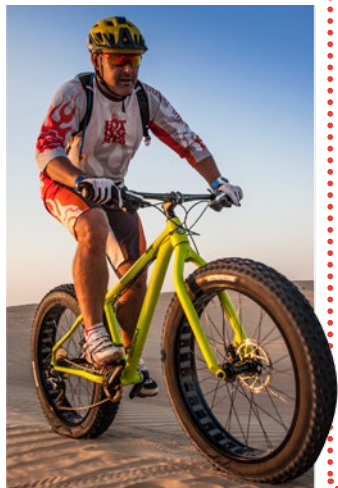
Overall, this would make a very suitable first Fattie and with such a good level of components would be a while before you might need to think about serious upgrades. However there are more options arriving in the market as this type of cycling is growing in popularity, which I've not yet had the pleasure to ride as yet.

In conclusion the Silverback Double Scoop is fun and easy to ride and offers great value for money and comes in a very nice neon yellow colour scheme.

Frame: 26" Butted 6061 Aluminium, Tapered 1 1/8" - 1.5" headtube, 190mm QR Dropouts, 100mm BB width
Fork: Rigid Fork 26", Aluminium, Suspension Adjusted length, Tapered steerer, Post mounts for Disc brake, 9mm QR Dropouts
Rims: Circle Star JP95HF, 32H, Colour Rintape, Black.
Hubs: Rear: KT, 6 Bolt Disc Mount, Adjustable cup and cone angular contact bearings, Cassette, 190mm QR Axle Black; Front: KT, 6 Bolt Disc Mount, Adjustable cup and cone angular contact bearings, 170mm QR Axle, Black
Tyres: Vee Rubber, Bulldozer, 26" x 4.7
Shifters: Shimano Deore, 2x10 Trigger, Black
Front Derailleur: Sram X5, Double, Bottom Swing Clamp-on 34.9mm, Black
Rear Derailleur: Shimano SLX Shadow RD Plus, Long Cage, 10 Speed
Crankset: Race Face Ride, Fat Bike Specific, 36/22T, L: 175mm ALL SIZES, Black
Cassette: Shimano CS-HG50-10, 10 Speed, 11-36T, Silver
Brake set: Shimano BR-M675 Open Hydraulic System, w/Metal Pads, Rotors Front: 180mm; Rear: 160mm, 6 Bolt, Black
Saddle: Sector, Cr-Mo Rails, Light Foam Padding
Handlebar: Sector Incline, W: 740mm; Back Sweep: 9° Up Sweep 7°; 15mm Rise; 31.8mm; 6061 Butted Oversized
Stem: Sector Box, S: 60mm; M: 60mm; L: 60mm; XL: 75mm, 31.8mm, black
Seatpost: Sector Plane, 31.6mm x 400mm; Black, Black bolts

The retail price is 6,999 AED.

The bike is sold at GoSport, Probike and through the Silverback Facebook page.



The HAWK-300T

ULTIMATE GTLS ILLUMINATION



Available at

Instagram: @almekshah
Facebook: www.facebook.com/almekshah
Mobile: +971 55 4005441

Weighing only 64g, the Hawk-300T features a reinforced polycarbonate case, K1 mineral glass, black-out dial with cool blue and orange T25 GTLS illumination.

So what happens when you wear your HAWK-300T during a long trip in the Australian summer? We asked HAWK-300T owner Nate Gough to test his watch during his recent trip answer the question: Is the Hawk-300T tough enough to withstand a four-day trek in the Australian summer?

TYPE OF EVENT

Camping and bushwalking

ESTIMATED DURATION

Four days

LOCATION AND TYPE OF TERRAIN

Queensland, Australia. Mountain

WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR DOING THIS CHALLENGE?

Product testing, team building, boost morale and test the physical fitness of the team at Outback Camping & Survival – a company whose sole purpose is to educate and supply knowledge to those who wish to explore Australia beyond the coastal regions.



WHAT WILL BE YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

Endurance through 30km of mountainous terrain.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU OWNED A HAWK-300T NITE WATCH?

Five years. I also own an MX10-201.

DID YOU WEAR YOUR WATCH FOR THE ENTIRE EVENT?

The watch never left my wrist for the entire event and the training sessions leading up to Operation Fresh Air.

DID YOU USE YOUR WATCH FOR TIMING THE EVENT?

Yes, as we left base camp I recorded what time we departed and what time we returned from each bushwalk.

DID YOUR WATCH KEEP GOOD TIME?

Yes, it keeps me on time, every time.

DID THE WATCH BECOME COVERED IN MUD AND SWEAT?

Yes, on all of the bushwalks the watch encountered plenty of sweat and mud while descending down the mountain, down to the waterfalls in the valleys.

WAS IT RAINING?

Yes, there were constant light showers with 30km/h wind gusts for the first two days. The watch was exposed to the elements at all times.

WHAT WAS THE ESTIMATED AVERAGE TEMPERATURE?

18°C, which is a cooler temperature than normal for this time of year, considering that it is summer and it's suppose to be in the high 20s to mid 30s.

DID YOU DO ANY CLIMBING OR SIMILAR ACTIVITIES?

Yes, we climbed up and down a couple of short waterfalls during the bushwalks.



WAS YOUR WATCH SUBJECT TO HARD KNOCKS AND ROUGH TREATMENT?

During the bushwalks I had a couple of times where I had lost my footing and hit the watch against rocks as I was descending the mountain to get to the waterfalls.

WERE YOU ABLE TO EASILY READ THE TIME?

The time on the watch is easy to read both day and night.

WAS THE WATCH COMFORTABLE AND SECURE ON YOUR WRIST?

The watch is very comfortable and I am never worried about losing it.

WAS THE GLASS SCRATCHED OR BROKEN?

Yes, a minor scratch was found after losing my footing and hitting it against a rock. The scratch can only be seen at a certain angle and does not restrict the time whatsoever.

WAS THE WATCH SUITABLE FOR THE ACTIVITY?

It was very suitable for this activity

DIFFICULTY RATING: 7/10

I have always had a good experience with Nite watches. The comfort and durability is second to none. I have a lot of confidence in this watch and would highly recommend it to anyone who enjoys the outdoors, extreme sports or is in the military.

WHAT WAS THE MOST EXTREME THING THAT YOU AND YOUR WATCH HAD TO ENDURE DURING THE EVENT?

Climbing up and down waterfalls with a 15kg day pack.

RATE YOUR WATCH OUT OF 10 – 10 BEING THE HIGHEST

COMFORT	10
DURABILITY	10
RELIABILITY	10
ILLUMINATION	10
APPEARANCE	10
DESIRABILITY	10

PRODUCTS

A round-up of quality products available right here in the UAE

Silverback Stride 15

2,699 AED/QAR; 93.4 OMR

Available at GO Sport stores at Dubai Mall, Abu Dhabi Mall and Bawabat Al Sharq Mall in the UAE; Villaggio Mall and City Centre Doha in Qatar; and Muscat Grand Mall in Oman

The Stride range has been tailored specifically for the needs of the recreational mountain biker. The frame is made from hydroformed lightweight alloy tubing, and uses sport specific geometry to inspire confidence. Shimano hydraulic disk brake ensures optimal stopping and the Suntour 100mm front suspension smoothes out the terrain and allows the rider to enjoy the outdoor trails. Available in size small, medium and large.



Sony Action Cam HDR AS100V

1,999 AED

Available at Al Yousuf Showrooms across UAE



- Comes free with Live View Remote Watch
- Free Waterproof Case (5m)
- 13.5 Megapixels
- MP4: MPEG-4 AVC/H.264
- XAVC S format: MPEG-4 AVC/H.264
- Built-in Microphone, Monoral Speaker
- Wi-Fi
- GPS
- NFC
- Weight: 67g
- Splash proof without case

Specialized Fatboy Junior 24" and 20"

AED 3,950

Available exclusively at The Cycle Hub, Dubai

- All the fun of a fat bike with the performance of a Specialized for youngsters.
- The Fatboy 20 inch and 24 inch combine a lightweight frame and fork with 4.0 inch tires.





RESTUBE GERMAN WATER SAFETY BACKUP DEVICE

Words By: Bernhard Wiesner
Photos By: AeroFit

Coming across the RESTUBE, my first thoughts were: "This is so clear and simple; I have to give it a try." With more than 10 years experience as a whitewater and kitesurf instructor, I know there is always the possibility that something can go wrong on the water. Even the best equipment can fail, the weather may change or your legs may strike with a cramp. Access to a safety backup device must be a priority in deep water.

DROWNING

According to the WHO, there is an estimated 359,000 annual deaths caused by drowning worldwide. Natural disasters like floods not included. Most of those fatalities can be avoided with a safety backup device on hand. The RESTUBE is intended to provide you with this backup.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

A few years ago a passionate German kite-surfer and student of mechanical engineering experienced an almost fatal situation on the water. The idea evolved to create a safety



**ISPO AWARD
GOLD WINNER
2014/2015**

product for in-water-activities. RESTUBE was born.

The result is a small, lightweight pocket worn around your waist. In trouble, pull the trigger and the RESTUBE buoy inflates immediately blown up by a CO2 cartridge. By screwing in a new cartridge the RESTUBE is ready for use again.

FIELD TRIAL CONCLUSION

Over the last months I have worn the RESTUBE for kitesurfing and sea kayaking. I have never had any issue with it being obstructive to my activity and simply forgot I was wearing the device. But whenever I have triggered the RESTUBE (just to check it would work in a real life situation) it has worked perfectly every time.

In order to get additional opinions I handed the RESTUBE over to our expert testers: Corey, owner of the Oceanman UAE, lifeguards, Mostafa, Mr. Dukite himself and Dan, founder of the Surf House Dubai. To quote some of their feedbacks:

"Surprisingly simple." "You don't feel it." "I never wear a life jacket because it restricts me but this is the perfect alternative." "It really works" "I will definitely use it for our courses."

FOR WHOM DOES THE RESTUBE MAKE SENSE?

The best life jacket is useless when it is left back in the car. Many people on the water refuse to use it because it is too bulky. Wearing the RESTUBE provides you with a full range of movement, allowing you to concentrate on your water activity and without the restrictions you find with many PFDs.

SWIMMING, TRIATHLON, STAND UP PADDLING AND SURFING

Swimmers are encouraged to use the RESTUBE when training long distances in the sea or within dangerous currents. Surfers will benefit from the RESTUBE in extreme weather conditions and big waves.

KITESURFING

Kitesurfers always face the chance of having to get rid of their kite in emergency situations or failing to relaunch a foil kite. The RESTUBE



**World Health
Organization**

DROWNING

- Drowning is the 3rd leading cause of unintentional injury death worldwide
- There are an estimated 359,000(!) annual drowning deaths worldwide

will assist in these situations and will also provide kites with the confidence for training new moves.

BOATING, KAYAKING, ROWING, FISHING

Only a small percentage of individuals on boats wear a life jacket. Most refuse to wear a PFD for convenience reasons. No excuses anymore! The RESTUBE is as convenient as possible.

WHO SHOULD NOT USE THE RESTUBE?

The RESTUBE is definitely NOT suitable for whitewater activities like river rafting. The buoy on the strap might get tangled at an obstacle leaving you trapped in the current.

AWARDS

The RESTUBE has been awarded with the ISPO GOLD AWARD 2014/2015 and is officially approved by the VDWS – German Watersports Association.

The RESTUBE is available for 500 AED at Adventure HQ, Surf House Dubai and Dukite. More infos at www.Restube.me.

My personal recommendation: get a RESTUBE – never go on the water without it. Even if you don't need to trigger, it is worth the money. Having a back up will make you feel more confident and max your fun on the water.



PRODUCTS

Nyeri Men's Mesh Tee

220 AED

Available at Adventure HQ

The Nyeri short-sleeved Tee is made from high quality performance fabric which flexes with your body for unrestricted movement. Its moisture wicking, dri-fit construction makes it the perfect garment for any kind of running or cross-fit activity. Rear MP3 loop. Reflective stripe at rear. Performance fabric keeps you dry and comfortable. Colours: Brilliant Blue and Iron.



Ikela 7/8 Yoga Leggings

270 AED

Available at Adventure HQ

These fashion-forward tights are suitable for a full range of low to high impact sports from studio to streets. Fabric for comfort and intrinsic design detailing to create a flattering finish that is sure to create flare to your wardrobe. Power mesh along waistband for added support, better fit and comfort.

OWENS RUN SHORT

195 AED

Available at Adventure HQ

Great for all workouts, these shorts provide the perfect fit and coverage for the active female, from going to the gym to running at any distance. Combining fashion and function these shorts offer a supportive floral printed waistband and laser cut detailing to make a statement. Features: side splitting panels for greater movement and drawstring waistband for size alterations.



The skinny on Fatboy

Photos By: Jung Francisco and Abrito Rosellosa Jr.

The Fatboy is an easy bike to ride compared to a traditional road or mountain bike because of the instant sense of stability and control you feel.

The bike is surprisingly light even though the tyres are so big but that's the whole point of a fat bike as you are basically riding on a cushion of air. The transition from road to sand is almost effortless giving you a smooth enjoyable ride to before unreachable places. The handling is responsive and SPECIALIZED have carried out a lot of research and development to ensure that the riding experience is superb by managing their own design and geometry for the Fatboy. Some of the other noticeable factors are when you are riding the Fatboy you always keep thinking "this is so cool" and everyone who sees you says "wow that's so cool!" Once you can stop staring in awe of the Fatboy and actually get on the bike, you will discover the real fun.

What is it about fat bikes that attract everyone, especially people in the UAE, to them?

The best thing about the new Fatboy Junior bike is that they can go anywhere! Other bikes would struggle in the sand (usually sinking or make pedaling extremely difficult), but because of the surface area of the Fat Boy's "fat" tyres this is no problem. This

makes the Fatboy ideal for all terrain especially here in the desert. And now camping season is upon us, they are even more applicable! They are absolutely awesome and we are expecting them to be very popular with people here in the UAE. How many times have you ever ridden down the face of a dune on a bicycle?

Fatboy FAQs

The Fatboy and similar "sand bikes" have been around for a few years but no one really offered a quality option for kids. The SPECIALIZED Fatboy Junior is available in both 20" and 24" wheel size and comes in pretty cool colours, encouraging riders as young as five years old to take up cycling as a hobby and a sport. We believe that giving people as many options to get outdoors and be active will lead to a healthier society. It's about choice, and if before Fatboy bikes were purely for adults, now kids can get in the fun.

It's not just the four-inch tyres that make the bike great but the fact that it's made of high quality aluminium with the same standards and durability as an adult bike. Basically it's not a toy but a proper instrument when it comes to cycling. We also really love the colours as they are bright and attractive.

The Fatboy can be enjoyed by anyone who wants a fun riding experience on all terrains; cycling is for everyone and one of the best ways to get the whole family out together. Fatboy is also available in adult

sizes. We have a brand new stock of Fatboy adult bikes available at The Cycle Hub!

What makes Fatboy different compared to other bikes for kids?

Apart from the larger tyres, the geometry of the bike is very relaxed and the design allows for cycling on all types of terrain especially desert and snow which are usually two terrains that no other bicycle can handle. The bikes are made with disc brakes to ensure proper braking where usually the regular 20 and 24 inch bikes for kids come with more basic v-brakes and design.

Who can and should ride a Fatboy?

The Fatboy Junior is an ideal bike for any children who want to ride on two wheels from a young age. The wheel diameter size of the 20-inch Fatboy are ideal for kids from five years of age; as they grow they can get onto the 24-inch wheel size before moving onto the adult bikes.

Why is Fatboy good starting bike for junior riders?

Because the bike has wider tyres and bigger air volume, this makes the bike much more stable and easier to ride. This also helps making learning to ride a fun experience as the bike has such a "wow" factor!

Additional information for customers?

You can test the SPECIALIZED Fatboy and Fatboy Junior at The Cycle Hub at Dubai Motor City and we will also be having a demo day in the desert later in January 2015. Call **04 425 6555** for more information or visit www.specialized.com/ae/en/bikes/kids/fatboy-junior and watch this cool video "Fatboy - The Shred Days of Christmas" at youtu.be/sW1q8nObJkU.



FATBOY 24
HYPER GREEN / CYAN / ROYAL BLUE



FATBOY 24
BLACK / ROCKET RED / TEAL



FATBOY 20
CHARCOAL / TEAL / HYPER GREEN



FATBOY 20
ROYAL BLUE / MOTO ORANGE /
GALLARDO ORANGE



PRODUCTS

Lifeventure Dakar 35 Rucksack 545 AED

Available at Adventure HQ in Times Square, Dubai and Dalma Mall, Abu Dhabi

This bag is a firm staff favourite being perfectly sized for work, on its own for short overnight trips or as a day sac for bigger journeys. There's a very easily accessible padded laptop pocket on the back making airport security checks a lot easier and large main compartment with lockable zips. An air-mesh padded backsystem ensures comfort. The bag meets airline hand luggage requirements. Travel tip: hide your passport in the hidden zippered security pocket.

- Made from tough Cordura® fabric for durability
- Air-mesh padded backsystem and shoulder straps
- Meets hand luggage requirements for major airlines
- Large main compartment with lockable zips
- Hidden "security" zippered passport pocket
- Padded laptop pocket (fits up to 15" laptops)
- Front organiser pocket and fleece-lined loft pocket
- Two-way stretch front pocket

Weight: 900g

Dimensions: 500 x 300 x 220mm

Capacity: 35L



Trek KRX 4,900 AED

Available at Modell's Sporting Goods Ibn Battuta Mall, Mall of the Emirates and Mirdif City Centre

Trek KRX road bikes are the real deal, with light, fast frames, larger 26" wheels, and race-worthy spec.

Frame: Alpha Silver Aluminum, DuoTrap compatible

Fork: Dialed road alloy

Front Hub: Formula alloy

Rear Hub: Formula alloy

Rims: 32-hole aluminum 26"

Tires: Kenda Kontender 26x1.0"

Shifters: Shimano Sora, 9 speed

Front derailleur: Shimano Sora

Rear derailleur: Shimano Sora

Crank: Alloy, 48/34

Cassette: Shimano HG50 12-27, 9 speed

Pedals: Nylon body w/ alloy cage

Chain: KMC X9

Saddle: Dialed 26" size, padded

Seatpost: Bontrager SSR, 2-bolt head, 27.2mm, 12mm offset

Handlebar: Bontrager SSR VR-S, 31.8mm

Stem: Bontrager Race Lite, 31.8mm, 7 degree

Headset: 1-1/8" semi-cartridge bearings

Brakeset: Shimano CX50 cantilever



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OUR EXPERTS

RAHAL TRAILER TENT REVIEW

Words By: Marina Bruce

Words By: Marina Bruce and Donna Reynolds

Having admired the trailer tents exhibited by Rahal Outdoor at the Dubai Off-road and Adventure Show, I was delighted to have the chance to "test drive" one for the weekend. My club, Oasis Offroad, organise regular winter camps but most often we settle down for the night wherever we end up after a day's off-roading; however, we are always keen to try new ideas so for our test, we set up a "basecamp" deep in the desert, yet easily accessible by gatch and sandtrack.

The manager of Rahal Outdoor, Sameh Abusafia, is a keen camper and off-roader and has developed a range of off-road trailer tents to cater to the needs of outdoor enthusiasts in the UAE. There are three in the range – the Moghamer (which means adventurer), the Rahal, and the Liwa which was the one we tested.



The Liwa with an unladen weight of 500kg was extremely easy to tow on the road with our Nissan Patrol Safari 4800cc, in fact you hardly knew it was there until you drove over one of the many speed bumps in Al Ain City. Most 4x4s have a hook, towbar or pintle on the rear as standard but you should ensure

that your towcar has an attachment for affixing the safety chains for extra security when moving. The trailer has brake/reverse/indicator lights which require an electrical supply from your car but in some emirates it is not necessary to utilise these providing the lights of the towcar are clearly visible from behind. As a side note, we were told that if travelling through Al Ain a flashing amber light should be displayed on the trailer.

Once deflated, driving over a recently graded gatch was no problem and the trailer was still easy to tow over an undulating sandtrack and some smooth dunes. On arriving at the campspot we used a board to stop the jack wheel from sinking and similarly small boards under the two rear stabilisers kept the unit perfectly level when camping.

The unit itself is basically a roof tent mounted on a trailer body, yet the trailer itself is so much more than a storage facility. An onboard battery powers water supply, toilet flush and led lights and there's room for a second battery for extensive overland trips. There's a compartment with a secure tie down for a gas cylinder as well as massive storage in the trailer body with plenty of room for camping chairs, tables and extra tents for at least six people – the payload of 500kg is more than enough.

Access to the storage is by way of two lockable doors at the front as well as the tailgate, which swings out to reveal a





stainless steel sink with tap and drain, drawers, a small cupboard plus plenty of worktop space. There are also two useful mini-compartments above the wheel arches which are great for tools, lights and any equipment essential when arriving at camp for the night.

The lack of a toilet discourages many from desert camping, but the Liwa trailer solves this problem with a fold out toilet compartment complete with flushing loo! The pop up toilet tent provided adequate privacy and shelter and Sameh advises that the latest models will have an improved version of this.

We were most comfortable overnight inside the tent on a huge mattress which measured approximately 200cm x 200cm – plenty of room for the 6ft tall husband to stretch out. We reckon it could easily accommodate a family of two adults with two young children.

Being seasoned campers with up to 50 nights a year under canvas, we were

impressed with the quality of the tent which had roll up windows on all four sides complete with insect nets secured with robust, good quality zips and tie-up points. The many different combinations allowed maximum airflow in all weather conditions and the tent was so cosy on our test in mid-December we had one of the windows open overnight.

Camping above ground will appeal to many who prefer to distance themselves from insects and other larger desert creatures – there's no chance of finding a jerboa in your boots in the morning (unless you leave them outside of course). Another great benefit of camping in an elevated position is that with the windows open a light breeze will filter through the tent, making it cool enough to camp in during the shoulder season on September and April, thus extending the camping season!

Packing up our camp at the end of two days off-roading was very easy and it took

only a few minutes to chuck our chairs and equipment into the trailer and fold down the tent.

Having once camped for four days in a SWB Pajero with four people, we contemplated that had the Liwa trailer tent had been available to us then, our journey would have been so much more relaxed. It would be perfect to take four or five people camping with a small car.

The Rahal range of trailer tents start at 15,000 AED and are available to rent from 300 AED per day (600 AED per weekend). Contact them via their website www.rahalloutdoor.com or email Sameh on sameh@rahalloutdoor.com.



The Desert Diva – read her blog at www.thedesertdiva.com

Oasis Offroad is a free to join offroad club based in Al Ain offering family trips and overland adventures in the beautiful sand dunes of Al Ain and beyond. Their website is www.oasis-offroad.com and their Facebook page is www.facebook.com/OasisOffroad

A WALK IN THE PARK

Moving towards an active and healthy lifestyle

Words By: Eulogy van Dyk

Photos By: Eulogy van Dyk and Step into Health by Aspire

If you look at the geography of Qatar you will soon notice that certain activities are just not possible in a country that is mainly flat, has a desert climate with no permanent rivers and the highest point above sea level is only 103m/338ft. However, as most of us living in Qatar now know, this small peninsula always offers an alternative for outdoor lovers!

You won't find your favourite hiking trail or wadi here, and apart from the ever so popular Zekreet and Inland Sea where you can go for a walk, run or do other outdoor activities over the weekends, the State of Qatar really spoils its residents with many lush green parks for a perfect early morning or afternoon walk.

These days you will see all over Qatar signage of a recently launched program called "Step into Health by Aspire" encouraging each person to walk at least 10,000 steps and more a day in a non-competitive, recreational and social approach. The program supports the country's National Vision 2030 to encourage the society to become a more active and healthier nation.

It is a fun way to become fitter and health-



Barzan Olympic Park

ier; after registering online you can collect your pedometer at one of the collection points or simply download the application on your phone and start walking!

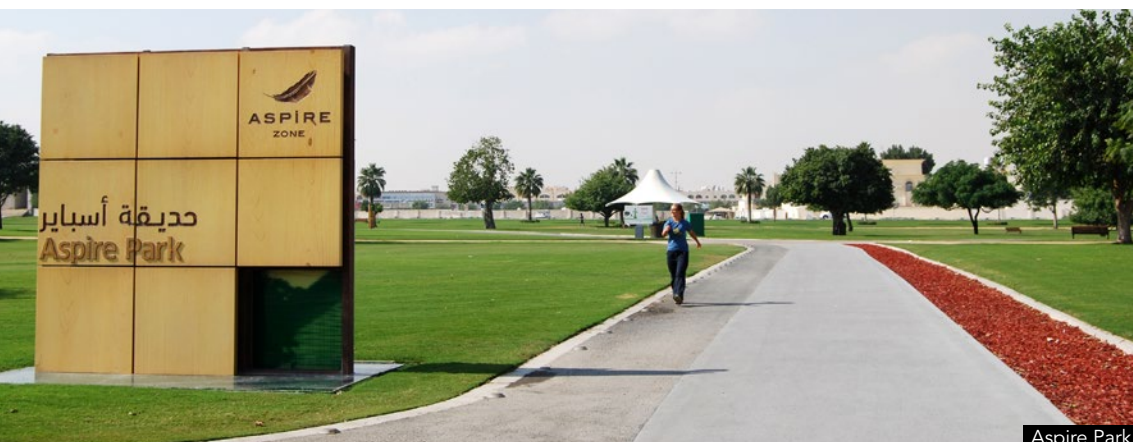
This "Step into Health by Aspire" initiative is a multi-interventions program using tools which set targets for the physical activity and nutrition and can help individuals monitor their performance aligned with an online program. How convenient!

The Aspire Zone Foundation under the supervision and management of the Healthy Lifestyle Program of Aspetar heads up this initiative and more information can be found online at www.stepintohealth.qa.

Here is some information on a few of our

favourite parks, situated in Doha, where you can turn on that App and 'Step into Health'.

The biggest and most popular park for outdoor fitness is the Aspire Park located in the Aspire Zone. The park itself has a 2.8km rubber track and if you combined it with the rest of the Aspire Zone pathways you can cover up to 10km, making it an ideal location for walkers and runners to train. Plenty open spaces of green grass, variety of trees, a lake with ducks and kids' playgrounds makes it also a perfect spot for a family picnic after your exercise. The famous Torch Hotel is also situated here, so ensure you get that snap shot of yourself with it in the background when visiting here.



Aspire Park

Location: 25°15'38.0"N 51°26'06.0"E (located behind the famous Villaggio Mall and Hyatt Plaza)

Opening Times: 8:00am - 10:00pm
Entrance Fee: 5 QR

Facilities: Outdoor fitness equipment, walking, running and cycling track, cafes, parking area, 24hr security

Depending on where you live in Doha, this park could be closer to you - Dahl Al Hamam Park. Located in Madinat Khalifa, adjacent to the intersection of Al Markhiya Street and Arab League Street. Perfect for an afternoon walk, leave the kids to play and go for a lap or two around the park.



Aspire Zone and Park walking routes



Stay active with Aspire Park fitness equipment

Location: 25°20'01.5"N 51°28'48.5"E

Opening Times: 7:30am - midnight

Entrance Fee: None

Facilities: Walking, running, football, basketball and skateboarding, children play area, cafeteria (after 5:00pm), free Wi-Fi, parking area and security

The Barzan Olympic Park is the first Olympic-style park in Qatar. Located just outside of Doha it serves as a great park for weekend walks and relaxation. Apart from the short jogging and walking path there are also a cycling track and playground for children, two swimming pools, a table tennis court, fountains, football grounds and two tennis courts.

Location: 25°27'22.2"N 51°24'23.7"E

Opening Times: 10:30am - 11:00pm

Entrance Fee: 5 QR (summer season); 10 QR (winter season)

Facilities: Walking, running and cycling track, children play area, cafeteria, mosque, parking and security

If you are looking to do a longer distance walk combined with amazing scenery and culture we suggest you combine the following parks: Al Rumailah Park, Sheraton Park, Doha Corniche and Museum of Islamic Art Park or simply visit them individually if you do not have a lot of time on hand.

Al Rumailah Park (Al Bidda Park) is located parallel to the Doha Corniche. Take a walk or go



The iconic Torch Hotel in the background in Aspire Park

rollerblading on the multipurpose track. The absence of walls or a fence gives the park a pleasant sense of openness. Once you are done here hop over to the Doha Corniche with a magnificent view of the Doha skyline, where a picture speaks a thousand words! This waterfront promenade extending for several kilometres along the Doha Bay with the Sheraton Park on the one end, closest to the city, and the Museum of Islamic Art Park (MIA) on the other. MIA Park is a community-friendly park with neatly lined concrete paths all along the shoreline. The park also provides great views of Doha skyline and have children play areas and cafeterias to sit back and unwind after your walk.

LOCATIONS:

Al Rumailah Park: 25°17'56.5"N 51°31'07.0"E (10:30am - 11:00pm)

Doha Corniche: 25°18'10.6"N 51°31'05.5"E (always open)

Sheraton Park: 25°19'04.9"N 51°31'54.5"E (10:30am - 11:00pm)

MIA Park: 25°17'43.2"N 51°32'36.8"E (10:30am - 11:00pm)

Always remember to have a pair of walking shoes in the back of your car. You never know when you might need them. Make time during your week to go out and enjoy a walk in the different parks in Doha, Qatar, an easy and convenient way to 'step into health'.



Aspire Park

2015



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OUR EXPERTS

Ponta Preta



Words By: Glen Gixti

Photos By: J Barbosa, Gabriele Rumbolo and Peter Aspden

It was late November and it was time to plan our next kitesurfing trip. After going through several kitesurfing magazines for ideas, my friend Khaled and I decided to go to Dominican Republic which is one of the famous kitesurfing spots in the world.

We were set to leave in the beginning of March 2013 and as time ran shorter I decided to do a checklist and found out that Khaled needed a visa to enter Dominican Republic which he had not applied for in advance and change of plans were imminent. We had to brainstorm once again, and this does not come easy because it is important to check the right season for wind, travel documentation, vaccinations, bookings and other travel arrangements.

An idea came to my head to consider Cape Verde, and after finding out that the forecast was fantastic and no complications with documentation, our new destination was set. Having only a couple of days to prepare there was no time to do any hotel bookings but we had the advantage to be able to change our flight tickets instantly, one of the good perks working for Emirates Airlines brings along with it. An acquaintance gave us the advice to go to Santa Maria village which was situated on the South of Sal island, one of the islands that make part of the Cape Verdian archipelago. Emirates fly out of Dubai to Lisbon in Portugal daily and then a connection of eight



World Champion Mitu Monteiro shredding waves

long hours at the airport before catching TAP Portugal airlines all the way to Sal, a journey that takes around 20 hours.

At 1:00 a.m. we arrive at our destination and so does all our gear in one piece and without damages yet we were wrecked and jetlagged. As we come out of the airport a swarm of taxi drivers rush towards us and we both had no energy for bargaining and took the first cab and head to Santa Maria village without any idea where we were going to stay for the first night at least. It turned out that the local people were friendly and our taxi driver showed us the first bed and breakfast lodging and settled everything there. As I'm making my way to bed I couldn't help but notice the wind howling and the waves gently pounding on the shore and I have to mention that it was one of the most pleasant nights I've had in the last couple of days.

Early morning I wake up to see the golden sun rising on the sharp horizon, had a light breakfast and went for a walk at the beach next to our hotel. After I returned Khaled woke up and I was dying to see the kite spot so we quickly sorted our rental car and headed to kite beach which was only 20 minutes away by car. After taking the wrong road we ended up stuck in the sand with our small 4WD Suzuki Jimny and had to seek some help from the locals that were digging salt pans to get out of the sand. We turned back and after passing by the little town of Santa Maria we spotted a hand-painted sign on a surfboard pointing towards kite beach.

Sal offers more than a dozen different kite spots with a range of conditions from beginner to expert levels. As we arrive at kite beach also called Shark Bay which is the main spot, dozens of kites were already playing around in this 10km stretch of sandy beach which was nicknamed humorously so after the little fish and sea turtles that frequent this location.

The epic centre of the island is however located on the other side on a rocky break where waves travelling all over the Atlantic Ocean hit on a perfectly naturally structured topography to create one of the world's best wave spot. This spot is called Ponta Preta and it has attracted the crème de la crème of surfers, windsurfers and more recently kitesurfers. This place hence is not for the fainthearted and an expert level is necessary.

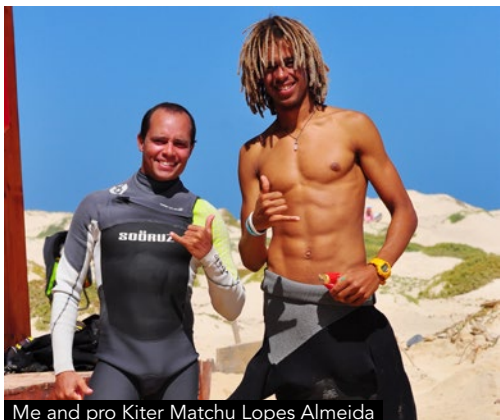
It was here at Ponta Preta where I met for the first time Airtton Cozzolino one of the Cape Verdian locals that made it all the way to win the world champion title in 2011. Airtton's kitesurfing style is purely based on surfing and the humble 20-year-old is known for his epic tricks and unparalleled waveriding skills.

Despite his friendliness, Airtton assertively mentioned that Ponta Preta is like a sacred place for locals and only surfboards should be used to surf this location.

I had no intention to disrespect the locals at all but I only had a twintip at the time therefore I negotiated to ride the waves as a promise that next year I would come to Sal and I would be kitesurfing Ponta Preta with a surfboard.

Mitu Monteiro and myself





Me and pro Kiter Matchu Lopes Almeida

The first experience kitesurfing such conditions with a twintip wasn't all that smooth but I was blown away by the fact that I managed to ride a 6ft wave.

During the time on Sal I was also introduced to the famous Cape Verdian, 'Mitu' Monteiro who had also earned the World Champion title in 2008.

The experience helped me to find my soul in kitesurfing and after ditching my twintip and going strictly on a strapless surfboard it was like learning to kitesurf all over again. I felt like someone who had been given the opportunity of a revelation and suddenly I had found my purpose. I was determined to ride the epic wave of Ponta Preta at all cost with a strapless board.

My holiday was soon over and I came back to Dubai with a determination of learning strapless and practice even in light winds, it was also the end of my twintip era for me, I just wanted to focus on nothing but my goal.

During the year I practiced and struggled and I went on several other trips that I will share with you later on. I had been to Mauritius and Maui, Hawaii where I have coincidentally met the pros from Cape Verde so I spoke to Mitu and asked him if he would give me some strapless lessons to further improve my skills.

I booked another trip to Cape Verde by myself in February 2014 and Mitu as promised gave me the opportunity to do a wave clinic and train with him for a week and without a doubt this was one of the lifetime events that shaped my kitesurfing future, not many people can say they have trained with a world champion and after the training I felt like Keanu Reeves in the Matrix only that I have been programmed with strapless kitesurfing skills from Mitu. Still a lot to learn though. Where is the blue pill?

In the meantime, while I was on the island for the second time across the Atlantic Ocean a massive storm was brewing and word got out quickly on the streets of Santa Maria village that it should hit Sal island on Saturday. When such storms occur across the other side of the Atlantic, after travelling thousands of kilometres dozens of people go to Ponta Preta to witness pro riders like Mitu Monteiro, Airtone Cozzolino and Matchu Lopes Almeida perform what they are best at. I wanted to be part of it but I wasn't ready to be a spectator, so I turn to Mitu and asked him if I had the skills yet to ride Ponta Preta. Mitu turned to me and said like a master, "You only have the skills, the question is if you have the guts!"

This comment hit me like a train and I had

no word to say in my mouth but I took my hand and gave him the Cape Verdian hand-shake which is a surfer ghetto style gesture.

During my time in Cape Verde I met a certain type called Mark Blakey, he was almost 7ft tall and a big South African kitesurfer who was also after taming the beast at Ponta Preta for the first time so we helped each other push through our fears.

The big day comes and we loaded the pickup trucks and off to Ponta Preta we went at 8:00 a.m. many photographers show up on the rocks with big cameras and super telephoto lenses waiting for the action to unfold. As you are getting closer to the spot there was a roaring sound of the pounding waves, it was like a very deep bass sound that elevated my heartbeat as it grew thicker. Two guys were already in the water with surfboards and three kitesurfers were preparing their gear.

This wave demanded respect and I had to calm down my heart before I got myself into the water so I did my ritual and meditated for about ten minutes and tried my best to set my mind. Finally I get up and rigged all my gear, and in a couple of minutes I was ready to go in the water. On the left hand side of Ponta Preta was a small stretch of sand where one could launch and go in but timing was critical as big waves come in sets and create beach breaks of about 6ft high that will easily crush you and throw you back on land. I waited for a couple of minutes until a couple of sets pass and then I jumped quickly on my strapless board and was using a 6m wave kite that moved violently in the gusty winds above me. Another set of waves was heading towards me and I panicked slightly but by hook and by crook I managed to get out.

In order to surf the big wave at the right spot you have to go out for about a kilometre offshore and upwind and then time the waves coming in. As I passed right behind the wave the rush of water that was coming off the lip of the wave hits you like a heavy rain storm. This did not help at all with my anxiety so I had to constantly get my focus on my mindset



Getting some advice from Mitu



and had to think about a beautiful moment of calmness, appreciate the sounds of my board as it cuts against the water and the wind that was brushing against my face. I felt like I was in my element and I was coming stronger. I did a couple of turns as I wanted to time the right wave. I see Mark Blakey on his starboard straight at me and screaming at the top of his lungs: "Go, man!"

I made some courage and went towards the break. I felt the water growing underneath me like it was an earthquake. I was about to hesitate and turn back but I had gone past the point of no return. It was a moment of silence where almost time stood still that I could describe in intricate detail as my focus was spot on. I drop in the first wave and my adrenaline was pumping at full blast. The wave behind me was roaring, but I wouldn't look back at all and right in front of me the water was smooth as butter. I managed to pull one bottom turn and then up the wave shoulder and out. The anxiety that was at the top of my nerves turned into confidence and as I was screaming at the top of my lungs I wanted to do it all over again. What a rush!

This was by far the most exhilarating experience I have ever had in my whole life; it was something I lived for all my life! I had the biggest smile on my face that I couldn't take off for days.

The ocean is one of the most powerful forces of nature and this experience was close enough to help me realise how thrilling it is to harness that power and ride it with passion. For those who are tempting I can strongly recommend it but one must never forget that respect is the key and always remember that nature is always stronger.



In months to come Glen will share a few real-life experiences and tips and is also here to field any of your kitesurf related Qs. So, if you have any ahead of the UAE season kicking off, send them in and we'll test his knowledge. Please check Glen's blogsite at, www.boardertube.com

OUR EXPERTS

A UNIQUE RIDING EXPERIENCE BROUGHT TO YOU!

Words By: John Basson

About two years ago, prior to Just Gas It really kicking off, I had a long conversation with Shadi Just Gas It co-owner regarding a bike rental business in the UAE. 'You have to offer something the others don't offer.' Was one of the key inputs I could give Shadi. This they have done very successfully with their great service and the location/facilities. It is a pleasure to visit them and go riding from their 'farm' just outside Dubai. None of the other outfitters have this, and it is one of the reasons Just Gas It is doing so well.

So, what do you think was the advice I gave to my good friend and riding buddy, Pavel Annenkov, when he approached me regarding a bike rental operation/business in Al Ain? Very simple: 'You have to offer something the others don't offer.' Pavel's initial reply was that Al Ain offers the best dunes and desert riding in the UAE and that alone should be reason to come to Al Ain. 'Yes, I agree, but there has to be more to offer than just "our" dunes...'

Before we get to what makes Moto Desert Rides unique in the UAE, let's look at the operation:

As there were no Honda CRF450X bikes available in the UAE at the time – and both Pavel and I believe that these are the best and most reliable off-road bikes one can buy – we had to source these bikes elsewhere. After many emails, money transfers, shipping agents, customs and a great deal of help and inputs from our friend Wyndham Top, we managed to get some bikes from abroad. Moto Desert Rides' current fleet exist of six bikes and two quads. Still nothing special, but let's continue.



As most off-road bikes are designed to take riders with a body weight of about 75kg and 1.75m tall (165lb and 5'7") many of us are actually too heavy (and tall) for these bikes. They can handle the extra weight and are very strong, but need suspension adjustment and the taller riders have an uncomfortable posture when riding a standard bike. Two of Pavel's bikes have been modified to accommodate taller and heavier riders. Something he has already benefited from on several tours with riders over 6' joining him on some rides! I could be wrong, but I don't think any of the other operators have any bikes modified for this.

We don't have to mention that all the riding and safety gear is provided as this goes without saying. What has to be mentioned is Pavel's skill and riding experience that comes with every tour! He has crisscrossed the UAE's desert, by day and by night. He has raced on both quads and bikes in the Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge, the Baja and local races. One of Pavel's intentions with MDR is to attract international riders who would like to improve their desert riding skills prior to participating in major international events. Pavel is ready to share and teach his experience on every ride. His passion for riding is the driving force behind Moto Desert Rides and nothing else. He lives to ride and with Moto Desert Rides he can live his dream.

Now let's get to the good part! Many of

us have our special spot where we camp or that section of the desert that we love most. Pavel has mobilised his whole operation in order to deliver it to his clients anywhere in the UAE. How many times have we had friends come and visit for a couple of days. There is just too much to do and trying to fit everything in one visit just does not work. You want to show your friends the desert and take them camping for one night. No problem, Moto Desert Rides will come to you! You just send Pavel the GPS position and time you would like him to be there and you have the bikes delivered to your special spot. You ride from there and no time wasted. Abu Dhabi, Liwa, Al Ain or Dubai, he will be there.

So next time you want to get out there and ride, don't forget you chose the location and Pavel delivers. Of course if you want the best riding in the UAE then Al Ain is the place to ride.

You can follow Moto Desert Rides on their FB page or contact Pavel on 050 447 8400 for a true desert riding experience.

Ride safe and go for gold,

John



PEOPLE

This month we get down to brass tacks with one of the gentlemen partly responsible for bringing us the UAE's preferred "fun run", **John Young**. He's been it, he's done it, he's run it – and now he's running it. No doubt January will be a busy month for this all round good guy.

You're pretty busy again as the February comes clearer into focus.

I am, yes. The Wadi Bih run has some special challenges as the route goes up into the mountains of the Musandam Peninsula from Dibba on a rough gravel track and the condition and accessibility of the route varies from year to year depending on the weather conditions. Since 2007 we have been running the race from Dibba up Wadi Khab Shamsi to a high point on the road and then back down the same route. The previous (pre 2007) route through the mountains from RAK has been closed to us due to border restrictions

Can you remember your first encounter with the wadi?

When I came to the UAE in 1989 my long-term passion with the mountains lured me to the Musandam area where I met John Gregory, who had already been resident in the area for about 10 years and was an ardent climber and mountaineer. In the cooler winter months we used to explore some remote areas of the mountains and I remember one trip where we climbed a large peak above the Wadi Bih road and where we were sitting, having our sandwiches, the idea came up that it would be a great to run across the mountains. John Gregory took this idea and, with the RAK social running group the Hash House Harriers, initiated the first Wadi Bih run in January 1993, when 16 teams of five people gathered on the RAK side of the mountains for a social camp on the Thursday before heading off very early on the Friday to cover the approximately 75km distance through the spectacular wadi over the high point of the mountain and down the narrow Wadi Khab Shamsi canyon to the finish.

The Wadi Bih Run is cemented on the local calendar. What do you think is its far-reaching appeal?

If the run is compared to the majority of other sporting events in the region its uniqueness lies in the location and the environment, where participants are taken out of their normal comfort zone in the city and face the challenges of a steep ascent through some very rugged and dramatic canyons and mountains. The run is also a great example of camaraderie between friends, family members and work colleagues who come together in a relay team and support each other through a great physical challenge.



Does 2015 bring any changes to the event?

For the last few years there have been difficulties in crossing the UAE-Oman border in Dibba, which has involved us in liaison with the authorities to attempt to ensure a smooth flow of participants through the border. This will be a challenge again this year, but we have had meetings with the authorities and this year all runners, friends, family members, sponsors, organisation members and any other people involved or participating in the event need to submit their visa and passport copy through that our event listing on Premier Online.

The route will be as per the previous few years and will traverse through the very narrow and deep Wadi Khab Shamsi Canyon, which is very susceptible to being washed out in the case of a flash flood. The authorities in Dibba are generally very good in repairing and reinstating the road in a relatively short time but it's always a worrying period because if the Wadi is washed out just prior to the event we would have to fall back to our contingency plan of shorter routes with two or three members of the relay team running together to make sure each runners distance is maintained.

Who has completed the most Wadi Bih runs in its 23-year history?

This was a question that came up when we held the twentieth run a few years ago, and we went through the records to look at the some of the team captains that have been coming back over the years and there were a lot of names that popped up. A few that came to mind are Steve Grigg and Liz Driver although I'm sure there are lot of others who have completed many runs.

Have you set yourself or the organising committee any targets or goals?

This year we are developing the solo run, which is a relatively new category in the event and was originally undertaken by a very few hardy types about 10 years ago, but has subsequently grown into a very competitive race. The original solo was the full 72km, but last year we introduced a new 50km solo category which proved extremely popular and this year we are introducing a new 30km category that will appeal to serious runners, but not seriously mad runners!

Due to the ever increasing interest in the event we have split the event over Friday 6th and Saturday 7th February, to avoid congestion in the Wadi and on this basis we are expecting a record number of around 1,500 participants. We are keen to open up the event to international solo runners, as it's a great escape from the harsh winter of the northern hemisphere.

I am sure you will have a final farewell with John Gregory as you have been walking partners for many years, is there a personal reflection on your camaraderie that you would be happy to share?

When I arrived in the UAE in early 90s I was doing a lot of exploratory hikes in different parts of the Musandam, mainly with John and had a few trips into Wadi Ghalilah to try and find a route up the head wall, which we had heard was feasible. We could not find a direct way, but found an easier route away from the steep cliffs and on reaching the top of the cliff found a tenuous path/scramble precariously heading down the cliff. This is the hike/climb that is now known as Stairway to Heaven and is one of the classic mountaineering routes in the area.

Finally, any words of encouragement to those individuals or groups who may be 50/50 about entering a future Wadi Bih event?

To some, the Wadi Bih run is a competitive event, but for the majority it is a physical challenge and a great social day out with friends. The way the event is structured with a number of stage markers means that each runner runs a series of relatively short stages before meeting up again with their team vehicle, so even the not-so-great athletes can enjoy the fresh air and environments of the great outdoors.

On the social side we have a regular competition to try and find the best named team and also the best dressed team. So even if you're not super sporty, put your thinking cap and think about forming a team with a humorous or anecdotal name or head down the souk to buy some unusual characteristic running gear for the fancy dress category. Whether you're a serious competitor or a fancy-dress fun-runner. We would love to see you on the start line on either of the February race days the 6th or the 7th.

LOCATIONS

GET OUTDOORS IN THE UAE

Hiking – A series of articles to help you start or progress your hiking in the UAE

Hiking and the issue of grading

Words By: Sean James

(All images are from our hikes at Outdoor Arabia)

How difficult a trek has always been a debatable matter. Globally no single system really exists to compare hiking trails.

However in a number of studies in Australia, 97% of respondents said that the grading of a hike was the key decision that enabled them to decide if a walk was the right level of difficulty for them. Here in the UAE, hiking opportunities are vast but the infrastructure around it does not exist. There are no official trail building or maintenance schemes, no trail markings, no guidebooks, very few online databases and no recognised national qualification for guides.

Steep broken ground with no defined trail



Having said that, many residents continue to enjoy the mountains, deserts and wadis here in Oman and the UAE on their own journeys of exploration.

The issue of grading trails is compounded by the fact that many different systems exist worldwide. Many systems have common elements and have been created by companies, organisations and individuals in an attempt to categorise the adventure product that they are offering and also to cope with the different types of terrain and trails they have. We take it for granted that when we hike, even with a guide that the hike is within our abilities. However a combination of greater numbers of novices seeking to explore the wilderness, with less skills and experience and with increased demands on time, hikers are left with less and less time in which to plan and make proper decisions in choosing an adventure. There is now a reliance more than ever to depend on the decisions of others in grading these trails and to not to lead us into trouble.

Heading out into the desert or wadis of the UAE without an understanding of the seriousness of a hike can lead to problems and without the experience or skills to deal with these, can result in fatal consequences.

With that in mind and with an eye to how the treks run by Outdoor Arabia are graded, we look at some of the grading systems around the world and how to make

a personal judgement. Knowledge gives confidence so every time you go out hiking try and do your own classification.

WHAT EXACTLY IS A GRADING SYSTEM FOR HIKING?

The objective of any grading system should be fairly simple. To inform people about the features of walking tracks and assist in the marketing and promotion of walking as a leisure activity. By providing a standardised 'level of difficulty' hikers are able to gauge whether a particular track is suitable for them.

In the UAE, there will always be factors that change the grading such as the heat. What could be a two-hour hike with a small elevation gain in the winter on which you might take 1L of water could turn into something completely different in the dog days of summer.

WHAT CRITERIA SHOULD BE USED TO GRADE THE HIKES?

Any good grading system should consist of a number of measurables and try to remove any elements of subjectivity. Try it yourself. Which is the harder? Everest Base Camp trek, Kilimanjaro or the Inca Trail? In the UAE, the hike up Stairway to Heaven is considered very difficult but how hard is it actually? Is it any harder than a long hard trek through a wadi?

High level hiking overlooking Wadi Beih



Good clear trails leading into the distance



AUSTRALIA

A good example is suggested by the Australian National Parks and contains eight different elements.

1. Distance
2. Gradient
3. Quality of track
4. Quality of markings
5. Experience required
6. Steps (or difficult sections) present or not
7. Time taken
8. Symbol depicting difficulty

If we take a look at the individual elements they are quantifiable and together form an overall classification for the hike. Think of your favourite hikes in the UAE and some of the trails we have suggested over the past months. Where do they fit into the matrix below?



Mixed terrain with flat obvious trail but steep drops

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Gradient	Flat	Gentle hills	Short steep hills	Very steep	Very steep and difficult
Quality of path	Well-formed track	Formed track	Formed track, some obstacles	Rough track, many obstacles	Rough unformed track
Quality of markings	Clearly sign posted	Clearly sign posted	Sign posted	Limited signage	No directional signage
Experience required	No experience required	No experience required	Some bushwalking experience recommended	Experienced bushwalkers	Very experienced bushwalkers

NORWAY

Norway is different again and the trails are all colour-coded to let hikers know what to expect. Norway's grading system is based on four difficulty levels used both nationally and internationally: green, blue, red and black, similar to skiing pistes. The trail grading colours (and the difficulty levels they correspond to) are as follow:

Green: Easy. Short hikes requiring no special skills, suitable for all. Trail type: asphalt, gravel, forest and good trails. Less than two hours in duration. Elevation difference: less than 200 metres.

Blue: Medium. For hikers with basic skills.

Less than four hours in duration. Trail type: like green trails, but can have more demanding stretches. Elevation difference: less than 400 metres.

Red: Challenging. For experienced hikers in good physical shape/condition. These hikes require appropriate hiking equipment. Trail type: trails, open terrain, rock, scree and bare rock. Less than six hours in duration. Elevation difference: less than 800 metres.

Black: Expert. Hikes suitable for experienced mountaineers only. Hikers must be in good physical shape/condition. The hikes require good hiking equipment, plus use of map and compass. Trail type: longer and/or

more technically challenging than red trails. No maximum duration. Elevation difference: no maximum.

IRELAND

Ireland's classification of trails uses three key physical attributes:

- the width of the trail
- the gradient on the trail
- the nature of the trail surface

From these values they then go on to define five different categories: Multi-access, Easy, Moderate, Strenuous and Very Difficult.

SCOTLAND

An organisation called Walkhighlands in Scotland has created a very visual scale consisting images and description.

Easier walks, mostly on well-defined paths, with no special difficulties.

Slightly harder walks. Paths may be indistinct, navigation skills required.

Moderate hill walks. Terrain will be steep, map reading skills essential. This grade includes the most straightforward and popular Munros.

Harder hill walks. Can include longer walks and pathless sections calling for more careful navigation. There may be scree and minor scrambling. This grade is quite broad and includes the bulk of the Munros.

Tough by hill walking standards; these routes can be very arduous or include trickier scrambling. This grade includes the hardest or most strenuous Munros.

Yosemite Decimal System

One of the most recognised international systems is the YDS which has its origins in the USA. At the top end it realises hiking can become steep scrambling and even climbing.

- **Class 1:** Walking on a relatively flat trail with little chance of injury. Comparative to walking on a sidewalk.

Very steep ground requiring use of hands



A well defined path with some cairns with relatively little incline



- **Class 2:** A simple trail that might have a slight incline. You may have to use your hands to balance while scrambling up rocks.
- **Class 3:** You'll definitely need to use your hands and feet to find balance along parts of the trail while scrambling up rocks. There may be exposed terrain during the hike, though a fall should not prove fatal.
- **Class 4:** This hike will involve climbing up steep terrain, and even though the route will have some natural protection, a fall could prove fatal.
- **Class 5+:** Reserved for rock and aid climbing. Protection and gear recommended for these climbs as a fall will prove fatal.

Due to the level of this track and also some fatal accidents before, we do not recommend this trip unless you know 100% what you are doing. You should only go with someone who knows the way or with a guide. For Stairways we will not publicize GPS files. For guided tours or more information and tips if you want to go alone, contact Sean.



Google Earth Screen shot of the route

THE SWISS SCALE

The Swiss Alpine Club introduced a scale in 2002 that was adopted by other Alpine countries and has a scale from T1 to T6.

		Path/Terrain	Requirements
T1	Hiking	Path well beaten and marked, terrain flat or moderately inclined, no danger of falling.	None. Suitable also for sport shoes. Orienting without problem, in principle also without a map.
T2	Mountain hiking	A continuous path, generally marked, terrain in sections steep, danger of falling.	Good balance. Trekking shoes recommended. Basic orientation skills required.
T3	Challenging hiking	Trail not necessarily visible, exposed passages can be protected with cables. Hands may be needed to balance. Dangerous sections are usually marked. Danger of falling on exposed passages, gravel slopes, pathless rock slopes.	Very good balance. Good trekking shoes. Orientation skills required constantly. Elementary alpine experiences.
T4	Alpine hiking	Trail not present. Some places hands are needed to advance. Terrain quite exposed, tricky grassy slopes, steep rocky slopes, easy snow slopes or bare glacier passages.	Experience with exposed terrain. Stable trekking shoes. Ability to assess terrain. Good orientation abilities. Alpine experience. If weather deteriorates, escape can become difficult.
T5	Sophisticated alpine hiking	Pathless, exposed and difficult terrain. Some places easy climbing required. Steep scrambling, snow fields or bare glacier passages. Danger of sliding.	Mountaineering shoes. Reliable assessment of terrain. Very good orientation abilities. A lot of alpine experience. Basic climbing skills. Elementary skills of handling rope and ice pick.
T6	Difficult alpine hiking	Pathless, not marked, very exposed and difficult terrain. Climbing passages up to UIAA degree II. Tricky, steep rocky terrain, glacier with a higher danger of sliding.	Excellent orientation abilities, extensive alpine experience and expert level handling of alpine gear.

Stairway to Heaven

Difficulty:	Expert (Black), T5 (Sophisticated alpine hiking), Class 4 (YDS), Very Difficult (Ireland), Class 5 (Australia) 🧗🧗🧗🧗🧗
Gradient:	Very steep
Quality of path:	Some formed track, many obstacles
Quality of markings:	No signage
Experience required:	Extensive hiking, scrambling and navigation
Time:	12+ hrs
Technical sections:	Frequent

Quick Checklist Route planning

Start point	25°58'59.53"N 56° 9'48.91"E
Off-road driving required	Yes. There is a short off-road track to the parking area. Usually it is well graded. 2WD is possible.
Distance and time from Mirdif to start	131km 1hr 44min
Navigation on hike	Very difficult. Requires lots of exposed scrambling. Nearly all of the track is undefined and steep.
Time required for hike	12+hrs
Distance	15.5 km
Elevation gain on hike	2288m
High point	1717m
Grocery / water on hike	No
Possible to encounter a vehicle on trail	No
Suitable for all the family	Requires experience in scrambling, decision making and route finding, especially at night. Nearly all of the track is undefined, steep with loose rock.

Due to the nature of this hike, the download this month contains waypoints.

COMMERCIAL COMPANIES

To make their treks more appealing to some, commercial companies often take these rather dull categories such as T1 or Grade 2 and classify their hikes with evocative names such as Gentle Strolls, Scenic Rambles, and Challenging Hikes. We at Outdoor Arabia have hikes that are Suitable for Families.

HOW WE GRADE OUR TREKS AT OUTDOOR ARABIA

Every month in the magazine we upload a GPS file for you to go out and use. We also give a number of pieces of information that help you decide whether the trek is suitable for you. Look and evaluate the GPS file on software such as Google Earth before you head out. In addition, for the harder treks such as Stairway to Heaven, we require that we know your level of experience. This is either done by having been on a previous trip or an informal chat.

We use the following terms for our adventure hikes in the UAE.

Novice (Green)
Intermediate (Blue)
Advanced (Red)
Expert (Black)



At the end of the day, a grading system helps everyone. The guide knows that you can do the trek you are signed up for and you will feel comfortable that you are with other people who are also capable of making that hike.

A HIKE FOR JANUARY

Now is the perfect time of year to set some big goals either by going out by yourself or taking a guide. There are maybe three to four months of the season left. Revisit our download section at www.outdooruae.com/downloads and choose one. Alternatively join one of our trips. One of our most popular trips is Stairway to Heaven and we run it a number of times over the season. It's filling up fast though. Take a look at the example information for STH. Could you do it?

If you are not confident going or starting hikes alone or you just want to have an expert or a group of nice people with you, Outdoor Arabia is offering hikes lead by our expert Sean James. outdoorarabia.com/regional-trips



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LOCATIONS

UMM AL QUWAIN:

TAKING THE ROUGH WITH THE SMOOTH

To many of us Umm Al Quwain is famous for two things, the second one being the awesome 'retro-ish' Aqua Park, Dreamland; and the first, something we cannot mention here today. However, dig a bit deeper and what does this pint-sized Emirate have to offer in the way of an outdoor walking route?

It has actually been a slight clash of conscience whether or not I could or should recommend this as a walking route, but I have made the executive decision that it is worthy of mention and recommendation, although possibly not for all the best reasons.

Firstly though, ask yourself one question. When was the last time you had a huge sandy beach all to yourself?

Best will in the world, it just doesn't happen in Dubai anymore (unless, I guess you own the beach). Where have I traveled in recent years where I have had a beach to myself? Thailand? Not a chance – gap year students, die hard hippies and everyone in between. Northumberland? No, tribes of dog walkers and photographers battling through a head on gale. Salalah? Pretty empty, also, pretty wild and no chance of grabbing a quick dip, those currents were serious 'Game Over' territory. LA? Venice Beach, more like Menace Beach. Australia? Nowhere and at no time near the surf will you ever be alone. Accra? Unfortunately the beaches doubled up as a public convenience. Umm Al Quwain? Two hours, one egret, one feral cat, a few hundred crabs, a few tons of trash and no people. Surely that is worth at least a mention.

Life always seems to be a balancing act, balancing this with that and against something else. I love the coastline of Dubai, most people do. I do not however love the fact

that an unobstructed sea horizon is now an endangered species, just like so much of the off-shore marine life. I love seeing water sports being practiced as it really showcases the dynamism and drive of the outdoor community, however, the jet skis simply, 'no thank you.' And I love the cool mornings, warm daytime temps and chilly sunsets, but not the multiple beach closures at this, the best time of year. It seems so childish to expect to have things your way and the reality is you will always be disappointed in the long run; and although there were aesthetic hurdles to overcome at least Umm Al Quwain did offer an unspoilt horizon and the peace and quiet that sometimes proves too elusive in the big city.

THE ARRIVAL ROUTE

Take the 44 passed Ras Al Khor and Dragon Mart, on to the 611 northbound, exit for Umm Al Quwain at the 55 (second exit overpass) follow signs to Umm Al Quwain, straight over Clock Tower R/A next big roundabout is Fire Station R/A (the fire station is not actually on the roundabout, it is 50m to the right of it), here take third exit you will hit a road undergoing some lane-change construction just follow this to its terminal T-junction and that should be (again) another road undergoing repairs follow this to the right and this will lead you to the start point of the walk at 25°34'20.88"N 55°33'8.49"E

TO RECOMMEND OR NOT TO RECOMMEND, THAT IS THE QUESTION

First up the walk to the coast is only maybe 50m across a patch of scrub. You will however, begin to notice that something is a little off kilter to our usual expectations of the



UAE's coastal areas; and all I would say at this point is that some of Dubai's army of orange-uniformed litter picker would easily land some overtime hours in this particular patch of prime coastal real estate. As I got closer to the beach, visible rubbish was everywhere and seemed to be getting worse, until I hit the motherload of trash. Plastic bottles by the hundred, cardboard boxes, polystyrene floats and picnic sets, goat carcasses, various glass bottles, slippers and nappies, plastic bags, takeaway trays, cigarette cartons and alu cans. It appeared to be endless and was completely soul-destroying; and leaves one simply asking, 'what?' 'why?' and 'who?' In order to produce this level of littering there has to be some sort of collective thought process in play that actively chooses to willfully walk away from a picnic setting without doing a 30 second litter grab. This is precisely where my clash of conscience came in. 'Can I' or 'Should I' recommend this walk? I think I should firstly because, the rubbish and garbage, although being a constant throughout the entire walk, can be largely ignored once you are 250m into the actual beach walk. As usual, the high concentration of litter occurs right around the areas that people are able to



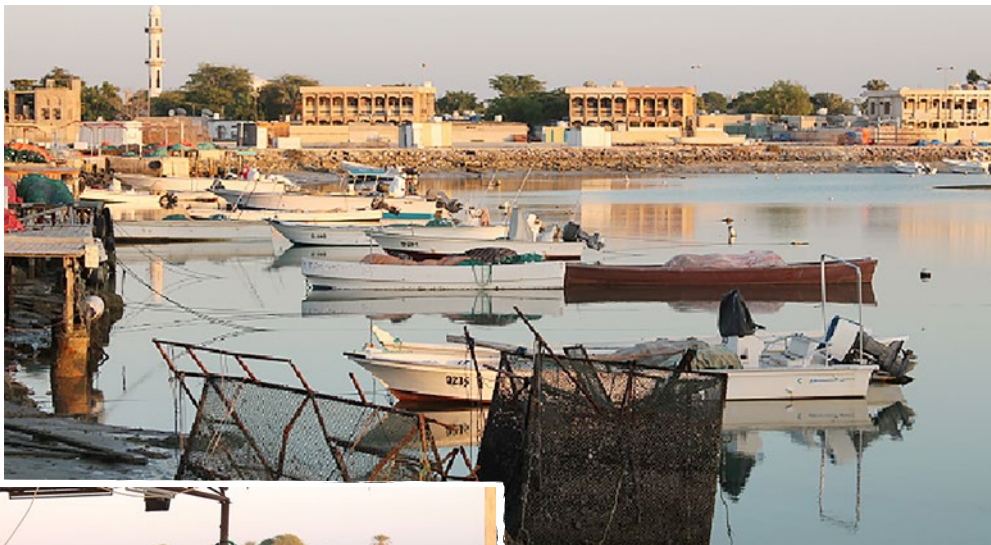
access by car (go figure) and therefore once you're a little on your way (approximately 25°34'44.94"N 55°33'14.67"E) the litter thins out considerably and can almost be blinkered out from this point on. Second point for recommendation, is very simply, maybe you are wanting to take a walk somewhere different, well, for sure, this is somewhere different.

Important: double check high and low tide and do try to link your walk to a low tide timing to get the most out of it. As you will see from the Google Earth map that accompanies, when it is high tide the beach is basically underwater therefore your walk will be more on the litter-strewn breakwater barrier or Corniche Street than the beach and rock pools. Also, if you have kids, watch out for the tide coming in, it seemed to come in when I was walking and it did so really quickly and even caught me off guard with its rate of attack.

Swimming any way along this walking route, I would not recommend. I certainly wouldn't and I am a strong swimmer. However, I did observe good three to four foot surf waves (beach and reef break) all along the walk, the main problem you would have here is they were breaking on to very shallow rock pools and reef outcrops. I am no expert but, I would say if you were thinking flying a kite or sail, you would definitely be fighting to keep your feet on the ground a lot of the time.

So what did this section of the walk have going for it? Well, once I had gotten over the shock of the rubbish dump and managed to zone out and my 90-minute lazy wander by the beach seemed like an enjoyable five or six hours. Not from boredom, but from relaxation. The coastline I encountered on the west-north-west, north-west walk bore virtually no resemblance to Dubai in any way whatsoever. There was a 180° watery horizon, the sun was positioned differently, the reflections looked somehow different. The waves sounded fuller, nothing 'lapped' on this route waves rolled and then broke; the view down the beach was a blend of silhouetted man-made shapes and a misty sea fret. The coastline smelled of rock pools and marine flora, it reminded me of the coastal smells from the north of England and Scotland, seaweeds and other assorted algae.

Two and a half kilometres from start point I reached a park and cafeteria, and it was like something from a bygone era. It reminded me of Salalah or Sri Lanka, the concrete base was weatherworn, the grass was, at best, patchy and full Arabic families and groups of Indians sat out grilling and shisha-ing quite unencumbered by guidelines or 'red line' prohibited signs. I am not saying this is a



good thing or bad thing, I am just saying that I personally enjoyed seeing it. I stopped at the cafeteria grabbed some chips and chai and read a couple of chapters of a novel, and was left alone to do so – nobody pestered me about anything. It was, just about the polar opposite to JBR and all their new state of the art beach development, and I find that refreshing in a way. It reminded me a little of the old Jadaf water ski centre.

From the cafeteria, I doubled-back along Corniche Street (only around 100m) to the road-side watch tower turret (25°35'15.52"N 55°33'50.10"E), from there I cut across some wasteland and over a collapsed wire mesh fence (which I will assume, will remain collapsed for some time to come) and through a small 'shack-street' to an opening on to King Faisal Road, overlooking the fishing quay (25°35'8.14"N 55°33'57.62"E) at the 'armpit' if you like of the creek. From here turn right (south west) and everything is a nice easy stroll, get your camera out and snap some fishing boat photos as you walk along the King Faisal Road, which is a main road, but by city standards traffic is pretty sporadic. If you are lucky you may, as I did see a herd of around 40 assorted sheep and goats tear across the municipality car park and devour anything remotely green they could get their greedy little lips around. You just don't see that any more in the bigger cities.

On this particular walk I turned right down Al Mara Road (25°34'38.66"N 55°33'37.34"E) which took me directly back to Corniche Street, near to where my walk began at the end I turned left and was basically at the scrubland that had been the starting point of this 6km looped route.

I would recommend the walk to an individual of indeterminate health or a family.

The roads are quiet, and although there is a lack of pedestrian crossing points, it's not like you'd be playing Frogger to get across safely. The only serious precautions I would recommend to anybody, but especially to younger children, would be trainers or walking shoes, because of the litter, comprising in some spots, of cans and bottles; and definitely no unsupervised play on the beach, rock pools or breakwater barrier.

Now I realise that some of you will be out there sucking through your teeth and muttering, 'not exactly adventurous is it? Tut! A walk around Umm Al Quwain.' And my answer is, 'no it wasn't adventurous, but it was different and free and a great detox to another busy week in a sprawling metropolis. So, I have done it. It is safe for an individual walker or family. There are refreshment breaks along the route and there is no reason why any of you shouldn't take a sneaky little duvet day or leave day and head along to Umm Al Quwain to enjoy, what I suspect is the equivalent to the countryside idyll.

They say the best things come in small packages. In Umm Al Quwain's example, it comes close, but unfortunately the litter just cannot be ignored; so close, but no cigar.

FACTS:

UAQ is the smallest of the seven, smallest in stature, scale and population. It has a population of around 75,000 – so not to be sniffed at, and an area just shy of 300sq. miles. Bet you didn't know that!

At the turn of the century (20th) Umm Al Quwain was producing double the number of dhows of Dubai was and four times that of Sharjah.

Archeologists cannot seem to leave UAQ alone, and every time they start new excavations they discover a fascinating new layer of ancient history like, Ed Dur, where the inhabitants of this Bronze Age site provided a bridge between the trade empires of Mesopotamia and India.

During the 1950s Umm Al Quwain was preferred to Dubai by the British as their potential Trucial Coast base of operations. How differently things could have been...



TIPS & TRICKS

How to create the perfect fishing buddy

Words By: Kit Belen

START THEM YOUNG

Unlike most kids, I hardly had any support from my dad when it came to fishing. At one point I was the one who forced him to take me fishing in the piers.

This was not by his choice as hunting small game was more his thing then, and to be fair with him, he had me tag along and it was fun and for a kid, it was very interesting and a great introduction to the outdoors. Hunting was just not for me. I loved going out with dad and his friends, but it was too messy for me. The long hikes with heavy gear to a good spot were not interesting – however, the part that really got me was to sit still and not talk for extended periods of time. If you know me, then you would know that it would be easier to stop floodwater than to keep me quiet.

Well before his hunting days, dad was a noted angler in his hometown, after hearing this from my aunts, uncle and my paternal grandmother, it added to the frustration of not being taken fishing, especially when the interest was there. It was only when I was in my early teens when dad took me on our first fishing trip. This was shortly after his brother came into town and gave me my first rod and reel. When we got around to go fishing and when it started, it kept going. Since he gave up hunting, fishing has been his favourite pastime and till this day, fishing is the bonding medium between my dad and me.

MY TURN

I have been fortunate to teach kids how to handle a rod and reel before it was my turn to teach my own how to hold one. A few years ago, a friend and I started a small program back home to teach people how to fish with a rod and reel, the turnout was good and we divided the groups into adults and children, I handled teaching the kids, while he handled

teaching the adults. When the time came for both parent and child to fish together, it gave me a kick.

From that time on, I have been looking forward to the chance of teaching my own kid how to fish. A few years later, I have my own family and since she was born, I have been looking forward to the day I take her out fishing for the first time.

I had to get some things in order for the little one. After four years and a few months of observing her, I had to look for a place where it would be easy for me to keep an eye on her and also make it more interesting for her, which means a place where she could see boats, birds, some space for her to run around safely and some fish to catch. I found a place with a big bonus – a clean beach and a playground, just in case she got bored. Four-year-olds are not the easiest to teach, especially those who have very short attention spans.



A small fish to us, but a whale to her. She gave the fish a name and sent it on its way after thanking it for the fun

CREATING A LIFE-LONG FISHING BUDDY

Fishing, as with a lot of things in life, is all about preferences – that being said, it is the single most reason for an argument between you and another angler. Anglers tend to not see 100% eye to eye because we each have our own formula for success. What works for us, doesn't mean it works better than other people's methods. Kids don't have their preference set yet, and are the perfect mediums to work with the bonus. Your preference will be their starting point until they discover their own preferences and they will evolve from there.

Whether you are a hardcore fisherman or a weekend warrior one thing is certain, you have to take it easy on kids. They might love fishing, or they might hate it down the line. What you are in control of is the experience that would lead them to the right path. Starting them with bait instead of lures will make it easier for them to understand things.



Explaining what a sinker is and what it does helps them understand why there are many parts to a rig

A rod tip twitching is less appealing than a bobber or float going underwater; it gives the kids a very visual experience and an image of something big taking the bait. Although my little girl knows what the concept of fishing with lures is, I started with bait just so she would know that fish eat pieces of shrimp, marine worms and crabs. She isn't afraid to touch them too! She loved her first time out and is already looking forward to the next fishing trip.

GEAR

Kaylee has her own rod and reel – she even named them. This is one of the factors that made her look forward to fishing. Since she plays around with the rod and reel at home, she is familiar with the functions and teaching her on the field was not a challenge. I took the time to show her which part was and what they do so she is familiar with them.

Now that she has expressed her liking for fishing, I will get her a tackle box loaded with some useful tools. I will give her a few of my floats and sinkers. Keep the hooks in your box and away from their hands, but do show them how to tie knots and explain what the function is for each piece of tackle. I took my time and showed her how to rig a sliding sinker rig, explaining what a sinker, swivel and leader is.

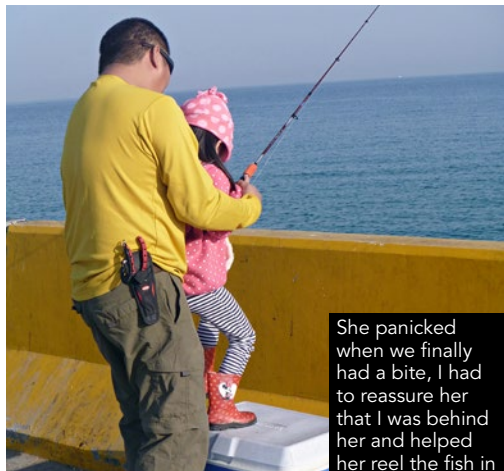
LOOKING FORWARD

Kids are able to absorb a lot of information and are natural knowledge sponges, so always explain as much as you can to them but don't assume that they would be able to learn everything fast, repetition is the key.

From Day 1, I taught her probably the most important lesson of all. After taking a quick picture, I had her release the fish. I also told her that I release a lot of my fish so that she will have a few to catch when she gets older. This is very important, as we are responsible for their generation's fish stocks. She was happy to see the fish swim away – and she even said that they would see each other again soon.

Happy New Year to all! May your lines be always tight in the year ahead!

Kit



She panicked when we finally had a bite, I had to reassure her that I was behind her and helped her reel the fish in

Out fishing pro who shares his experiences and expertise with OutdoorUAE through his regular column.
thefishingkit@gmail.com

the
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FINAL THOUGHTS

I caught a BBC World clip recently in which their correspondent for Rwanda was explaining that in the capital city Kigali, every last Saturday of the month is 'clean up day' which basically meant that all businesses and services were suspended until midday, and citizens and residents of the city were expected to get busy and clean up their patch of town. 'Wow! What a great idea!' But what can actually be gained from such an activity? Well, I don't know for sure because I have not taken part myself, but an educated guess, a feeling of pride, a feeling of overall well-being at having made a difference and, as the initiative is a community action, it also acts as informal education to youngsters that simply dropping your cans, cartons or wrappers is not okay.

This was a UAE beach I visited recently; it is mentioned in my article, 'Taking The Rough With The Smooth'. Littering on this level has to be regarded as unfortunate and unacceptable as it firstly detracts from the natural beauty that this part of the world has been blessed with, but also (to me personally) it also points a finger to people who are undeserving to share or enjoy such areas. I will try to steer this final thought to a more positive conclusion. Off the top of my



head, I know the Hilton Worldwide hosted an all-expenses paid underwater clean up during October where hundreds of kilos of rubbish were removed from around Marjan Island In RAK. Each year Emirates Diving Association complete numerous 'Clean up Arabia' events (www.emiratesdiving.com/cleanup_arabia.html) and last month, local fourbie club Emarat4x4 took out 40 club members and associates for a desert drive,

litter-pick and barbecue. Obviously these are not stand alone initiatives but they are at the forefront of my mind. I shall stop there, before I mention things that need not be mentioned here and now, and say a final big congratulatory pat on the back and 'well done!' to all those out there, who see the benefit in carrying out such selfless acts for the benefit of the wider community. A sincere thank you from OutdoorUAE.



Photos: Quirke, Delin

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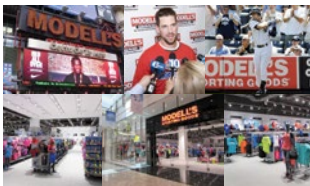
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Japan Marine General Trading, Al Garhoud Road, Liberty Building, Dubai, +971 559299111, +971 42828255, uday@japanmarine.jp, www.japanmarine.co
Rineh Emirates Trading LLC, Dubai, Al Quoz, +971 43391512, www.rinehemiratesme.com
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Al Sahara Desert Resort Equestrian Centre, Dubai, +971 44274055, equestrian.centre@alsahra.com
Desert Equestrian Club, Mirdif, Dubai, +971 503099770 / +971 501978888
Desert Palm Riding School, Near Al Awir Road (going to Hatta-Oman), Dubai, +971 43238010, www.desertpalm.peraquum.com
Dubai Polo Academy, Dubai, +971 508879847, www.dubaipolacademy.com
Dubai Polo & Equestrian Club, Dubai, Arabian Ranches, +971 43618111, www.poloclubdubai.com
Emirates Equestrian Centre, Dubai, +971 505587656, www.emiratesequestriancentre.com
Ghantoot Polo & Racing Club, Exit 399, Abu Dhabi/ Dubai Highway, Abu Dhabi, +971 25629050, www.grpc.ae
Golden Stables Equestrian Club, Al Khawanej, Dubai, (Nour) +971 555528182, www.goldenstables.ae
HoofbeatZ, located just inside the Dubai Polo & Equestrian Club, Dubai,

+971 501810401, www.hoofbeatz.com
Mushrif Equestrian and Polo Club, Mushrif Park, Al Khawanej Road, Dubai, +971 42571256, www.mushrifec.com
Qudraland Community, info@qudraland.com, www.qudraland.com
Rahal Ranch, Al Wathba Racing Area, Abu Dhabi, +971 566127914, www.rahalranch.com
Riding for the Disabled, Dubai, lessons@rdad.ae, www.rdad.ae
Sharjah Equestrian & Racing Club, Sharjah, Al Dhaid Road, +971 65311188, www.serc.ae
Racecourses
Abu Dhabi Equestrian Club, Al Mushrif, Abu Dhabi, +971 24455500, www.adec-web.com
Ghantoot Racing & Polo Club, Exit 399, Abu Dhabi/ Dubai Highway, Abu Dhabi, +971 25629050, www.grpc.ae
Jebel Ali Racecourse, off the main Abu Dhabi - Dubai Highway (Sheikh Zayed road) beside the Emirates Golf Club, Dubai, +971 43474914
Meydan Grandstand and Racecourse, Al Meydan Road, Nad Al Sheba, Dubai, +971 43270000, www.meydan.ae
Sharjah Racecourse, Al Dhaid Road, Sharjah, +971 65311155, www.serc.ae

Jet Ski

Dealers
Al Masaoood Marine, Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Road, +971 43468000, www.masaooodmarine.com
Al Yousuf Motors, Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Rd, +971 43390621, www.aym.ae/yamaha
Japan Marine General Trading, Al Garhoud Road, Liberty Building, Dubai, +971 559299111 / +971 42828255, uday@japanmarine.jp, www.japanmarine.co
Liberty Kawasaki, Dubai, Interchange 4, Sheikh Zayed Road, +971 43419341, www.libertykawasaki.com

Motocross & ATV's

Dealers
Al Badayer Rental (Rental), Dubai-Hatta Road, +971 507842020, www.albadayerrental.com
Al Shaali Moto, Ras Al Khor, +971 43200009, sales@alshaalimoto.com, www.alshaalimoto.com
Al Yousuf Motors, Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Rd, +971 43390621, www.aym.ae/yamaha
Golden Desert Motorcycles Rental (Rental), Dubai-Hatta Road, Dubai, +971 551532550, www.goldendesert-dubai.com
Just Gas It, Hatta Rd., Al Aweer, Dubai, UAE, +971 509192394, www.JustGasIt.net
KTM, Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Road, exit 42, +971 4323151, www.ktm.com
Liberty Kawasaki, Dubai, Interchange 4, Sheikh Zayed Road, +971 43419341, www.libertykawasaki.com
Polaris UAE (atv's), Ras Al Khor, Nad al Hamar Road, Al Ghandi Complex, Dubai, +971 42896100, M4, Sector 13, 10th Street, Mussafah Industrial, Abu Dhabi, +971 25555144, www.polarisuae.com
Sebsports, Al Quoz Industrial Area 1 Dubai, +971 43393399, www.sebsports.com
Wild X Adventure Shop, Dubai,

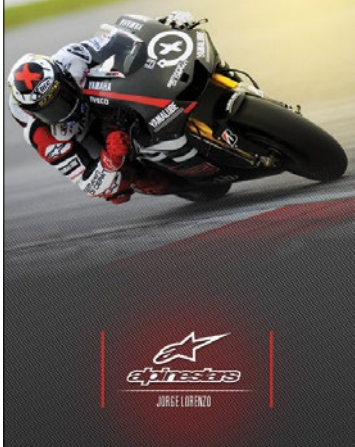
+971 48321050, www.wildx.ae
Equipment
Desert Road Tourism, Al Khor Plaza - 503, Dubai, +971 42959429, www.arabiantours.com
Sandstorm Motorcycles (Rental), Al Quoz, Dubai, +971 43470270, www.sandstorm-motorcycles.com
Sebsports, Dubai, Al Quoz Industrial Area 3, +971 43393399, www.sebsports.com
2XWheeler, Motorcity Dubai, +971 44548388, www.2xwheeler.com
Wild X, Dubai, Um Al Ramoul Industrial Area, +971 42852200, www.wildx.ae
Workshops and Services
Moto-X and Quad, PO Box 476214, Dubai, UAE, +971 50 6169727, www.gasgasmotos.me

Motorcycling

Distributors and Dealers
Al Yousuf Motors, Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Rd, www.aym.ae/yamaha
Ducati, Mussafah 4, Street 10, Abu Dhabi, +971 25535771, info2@ducati.ae, www.ducati.ae
Duseja Motorcycles, Dubai, Al Quoz, +971 43476712, www.dusejamoto.com
Harley-Davidson, Mussafah 4, Street 10, Abu Dhabi, +971 25540667, hd.auh@harley-davidson.ae, www.harley-davidson-abu-dhabi.com
Liberty Kawasaki, Dubai, Interchange4, Sheikh Zayed Road, +971 42822144, www.libertykawasaki.com
Polaris UAE, Al Ghandi Complex, Nad al Hamar Road, Ras Al Khor, +971 42896100, www.polarisuae.com
Tristar Motorcycles, +971 43330659, www.tristaruae.com
Workshops and Services
Al Forsan International Sports Resort, Abu Dhabi, +971 25568555, www.alforsan.com
Dubai Autodrome, Dubai, +971 43678700, www.dubaiautodrome.com
Emirates Motoplex, Umm Al Quwain, +971 67681717
2xWheeler Adventures, Dubai, +971 44548388, www.alainraceway.com
Yas Marina Circuit, Abu Dhabi, www.yasmarinacircuit.com

Off-Road

Dealers
Bling My Truck, +971 503634839 / +971 505548255, info@blingmytruck.com, www.blingmytruck.com
4x4 Motors LLC, Shk. Zayed Rd, Dubai, +971 43384866, www.4x4motors.com
Liberty Automobiles, Dubai, 800 5423789, www.libertyautos.com
Repairs and Services
AAA Service Centre, Al Quoz, Dubai, UAE, +971 4 285 8989, www.aaadubai.com
Icon Auto Garage, Dubai, +971 43382744, www.icon-auto.com
Mebar Auto, Al Quoz, Industrial Area 2, Dubai, UAE, +971 4 3469600, www.mebarauto.com
Off Road Zone, Dubai, Al Quoz, +971 43392449, www.offroad-zone.com
Saluki Motorsport, Dubai, +971 43476939, www.salukimotorsport.com
Equipment
Advanced Expedition Vehicles, Dubai & Abu Dhabi, +971 43307152, www.aev.ae
Al Yousuf Motors, Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai, +971 43390621, www.aym.ae/yamaha
Bling My Truck, +971 503634839 / +971 505548255, info@blingmytruck.com, www.blingmytruck.com
Heartland UAE, Al Mafraq Industrial, Abu Dhabi, +971 567231967, www.heartlanduae.com
Icon Auto Garage, Dubai, +971 43382744, www.icon-auto.com
Mebar Auto, Al Quoz, Industrial Area 2, Dubai, UAE, +971 4 3469600, www.mebarauto.com
Wild X Adventure Shop, Dubai-Hatta Road, Dubai, +971 48321050, www.wildx.ae
Yellow Hat, Nad Al Hamar, and Times Square Center, Dubai, +971 42898060, www.yellowhat.ae
Tour Operators
Arabian Adventures, Dubai & Abu Dhabi, +971 43034888, www.arabian-adventures.com
Desert Road Tourism, Al Khor Plaza - 503, Dubai, +971 42959429, www.arabiantours.com
Oasis Palm Dubai, Dubai, +971 42628889, www.opdubai.com



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 Abu Dhabi (Mussafah) - Tel: 02-5588890
 www.aym.ae

Clubs

Abu Dhabi Off- Road Club, www.ad4x4.com
ALMOST 4x4 Off-Road Club, +971 507665522, www.almost4x4.com
Dubai Offroaders, www.dubaioffroaders.com
JEEP Wrangler JK Fun Club, suffian.omar@yahoo.com, www.jk-funclub.com
ME 4X4, www.me4x4.com

Running

Clubs
ABRasAC, Dubai, www.abrasac.org
Abu Dhabi Tri Club, Abu Dhabi, www.abudhabitriclub.org
Abu Dhabi Striders, admin@abudhabistriders.com, www.abudhabistriders.com
Al Ain Road Runners, Abu Dhabi, +971 504188978, alainroadrunners@yahoo.co.uk
Mirdif Milers, Dubai, www.mirdifmilers.info
Dubai Creek Striders, www.dubaicreekstriders.org

Stand up Paddling, Kite & Surfing, Wakeboarding

Equipment
Al Boom Marine, Abu Dhabi & Dubai, +971 42894858, www.alboommarine.com
Al Masaoood Marine, Dubai, Sheikh Zayed Road, +971 43468000, www.masaooodmarine.com
Ikonic Brands, Suite 509 Düsseldorf Business Point Al Barsha Dubai, UAE, +971 506874178, info@ikonicbrands.com
Kitesurf Dubai, Kitesurf Beach, Umm Suqeim and Jumeirah 3 +971 505586190, www.kitesurfdubai.ae
Pearl Water Crafts, Dubai Marina Yacht Club, +971 553749398, www.pearl-watercrafts.com
Picnico, Jumeirah Beach Road Opposite Sunset Mall, Dubai +971 43941653
Surf Dubai, Dubai, Umm Suqeim, +971 505043020, www.surfingdubai.com
Surf Shop Arabia, Building 1, Al Manara Road (East), Interchange 3, Dubai, +971 43791998, www.surfshoparabia.com
UAE Kite Surfing, +971 505626383, www.ad-kitesurfing.net
Distributors
Kitepeople Kite & Surf Store, International City, Dubai, +971 504559098, www.kitepeople.ae
Ocean Sports FZE, +971 559352735, www.kitesurfsup.com
Operators
Al Forsan International Sports Resort, Abu Dhabi, +971 25568555, www.alforsan.com
Dubai Kite Surf School, Dubai, Umm Suqeim Beach, +971 504965107, www.dubaikitesurfschool.com
Duco Maritime, Dubai, Ras Al Khaimah and Abu Dhabi, +971 508703427, www.ducomaritime.com



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Kite Fly, Dubai, +971 502547440, www.kitesurf.ae
Kite4fun.net, Abu Dhabi, +971 508133134, www.kite4fun.net
Kitepro Abu Dhabi, Yas Island and Al Dabbayyah, Abu Dhabi, +971 505441494, www.kitepro.ae
Nautica1992, Dubai, +971 504262415, www.nautica1992.ae
Shamal Kite Surfing, Umm Suqeim Dubai, +971 507689226, astrid@shamalkitesurfing.com, www.shmalkitesurfing.com
Sky & Sea Adventures, Dubai, Hilton, Jumeirah Beach Road, +971 43999005, www.watersportsdubai.com
Surf School UAE, Umm Suqeim Beach and Building 1, Al Manara Road (East), Interchange 3, Dubai, +971 556010997, www.surfschooluae.com
Watercooled, Jebel Ali Golf Resort and Spa, Dubai, +971 48876771, www.watercooleddubai.com
Water Cooled, Watercooled Sports Services LLC, Hilton Beach Club, Abu Dhabi, UAE, +971 26395997, www.watercooleduae.com
Clubs
Abu Dhabi Stand Up Paddle, www.abudhabisup.com

UAE SUP www.uaesup.com

Water Parks

Aquaventure Atlantis, Dubai, Palm Jumeirah, +971 44260000, www.atlantisthepalm.ae
Dreamland Aqua Park, Umm Al Quwain, Emirates Road, +971 67681888, www.dreamlanduae.com
Wadi Adventure, Jebel Hafeet, Al Ain, +971 37818422, www.wadiadventure.ae
Wild Wadi Water Park, Dubai, +971 43484444, www.wildwadi.com

Other leisure activities

Abu Dhabi Golf Club, Abu Dhabi, +971 25588990, www.adgolfclub.com
Al Tamimi Stables, Sharjah, +971 67431122 \ +971 44370505, www.tamimistables.com
Blokart Sailing, Nad Al Sheba, Dubai, +971 556101841, www.blokartme.com
Children's City, Creek Park Gate No.1, Dubai, +971 43340808, www.childrencity.ae
Dolphin Bay Atlantis, Dubai, +971 44260000, www.atlantisthepalm.ae
Dubai Dolphinarium, Dubai, Creek Park Gate No. 1, +971 43369773, www.dubaidolphinarium.ae
iFly Dubai, Dubai, Mirdif City Centre, +971 42316292, www.iflyme.com

Sadiyaat Beach Club, Abu Dhabi, Saadiyat Island, +971 25578000, www.sbgolfclub.ae
Sharjah Golf and Shooting Club, Sharjah, +971 43999005, www.golfandshootingshj.com
SkiDubai, Dubai, Mall of The Emirates, +971 44094000, www.skidxb.com
Spacewalk Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi, +971 24463653, www.spacewalk.ae

Health, Safety & Training

Safety Lessons
Marine Concept Yacht Charter & Sea School, Rania Business Centre, Dubai, +971 559603030, www.marine-charter-concept.com
Safety & Leisure Training Middle East, Dusseldorf Business Point, Al Barsha 1, Dubai, +971 44502418, www.sltme.com
Sport and Health Centres
Bespoke Wellness, Dubai, +971 553724670, www.bespoke-wellness.com
Original Fitness Co., C6 Tower Al Bateen Bainunah St, Abu Dhabi, +971 2406 9404, www.originalfitnessco.com
Orthosports, 5B Street, Jumeira Beach road, Dubai, +971 4355060, www.orthosp.com
The Physio Center, Suite 405, Building 49, Dubai Healthcare City, Dubai, +971 44370570, www.physiocentre.ae

OMAN DIRECTORY

Adventure tours and desert safaris

Dolphin Qasab Tours, PO Box: 123, P.C. 811, Khasab City, Musandam, Oman, +968 26730813, www.dolphinkhasabtours.com
Go Dive Oman, Capital Area Yacht Club (CAYC), Sidab Muscat, +968 99289200, www.godiveoman.com
Nomad Tours, PO Box: 583, Postal Code 100, Muscat, Oman, +968 95495240, www.nomadtours.com
Oman Trekking Guides, PO Box: 917, NIZWA, Oman, +968 95741441, www.omantrekkingguides.com

Diving

Equipment

Al Marsa Musandam, PO Box: 44, Dibba, Sultanate of Oman, +968 26836550,

www.almarsamusandam.com
Al Sawadi Beach Resort, PO Box: 747, Barka - Al Sawadi, Oman, +968 26795545, www.alsawadibeach.info
Diving UAE & Oman, www.dive-uae-oman.com
Euro Divers CAYC Oman, Marina Bandar Al Rhowda, PO Box: 940, Muscat, Oman, +968 95035815, www.euro-divers.com
Extra Divers Musandam, PO Box: 498, PC 811 Khasab, Musandam, Oman, +968 99877957, www.musandam-diving.com
Global Scuba LLC, +968 24692346, www.global-scuba.com
Moon Light Dive Center, P.O. Box: 65, Madinat Qaboos, Muscat Oman, +968 99317700, www.moonlightdive.com
Oman Dive Center Resort, PO Box: 199, Madinat Sultan Qaboos, Oman, +968 24824240, www.omandivecenter.info
Omanta Scuba Diving Academy, Al Kharijya Street, Al Shati Area, Muscat, Oman, +968

97700564, www.omantascuba.com
Oxygen Diving and Adventures, PO Box: 1363 PC130 Alazaiba, Muscat, Oman, www.o2diveoman.com
Seaoman, PO Box: 2394, RUWI PC 112, Oman, +968 24181400, www.seaoman.com
Sub Aqua Dive Center, Hilton Salalah Resort, PO Box: 699, Salalah 211, Oman, +968 99894031, www.subaqua-divecenter.com

Stand Up Paddeling, Kite & Surfing, Wakeboarding

Equipment, Operators

Kiteboarding Oman, Sawadi Beach, PO Box: 133, PC 118, Muscat, Oman, +968 96323524, www.kiteboarding-oman.com
Oman's Kite Center, +968 94006007, www.kitesurfing-lessons.com

Camping & Hiking

Tour Operators

Safari Desert Camp, PO Box: 117, Postal Code 421, Badiyah, Ghabbi, Oman, +968 99310108, www.safaridesert.com

Fishing & Kayaking

Equipment

Az'Zaha Tours, +968 99013424, www.azzahatours.com
Water World Marine Oman, PO Box: 76, Muscat, 113, Sultanate of Oman, +968 24737438, www.waterworldoman.com

Boating & Sailing

Manufacturer

Saphire Marine, PO Box: 11, Post Code 118, Muscat, Oman, +968 99877243, www.sapphire-marine.com

QATAR DIRECTORY

Adventure tours and desert safaris

Al Mulla Travels, PO Box: 4147, Doha, Qatar, +974 44413488, almullatrivs@qatar.net.qa
Alpha Tours, PO Box: 13530, Doha, Qatar, +974 4837815, info@alphatoursqatar.com
Al QAYED Travel & Tours, Al Qayed Holding Bldg., D-Ring Road, PO Box: 158, Doha, Qatar, +974 44072244, www.alqayedtravel.com
Arabian Adventures, Al Asmakh Street, PO Box: 4476, Doha, Qatar, +974 44361461, www.arabianadventureqatar.net
Black Pearls Tourism Services, PO Box: 45677, Doha, Qatar
East Marine, West Bay, Doha, Qatar, +974 55200078
E2E Qatar Travel and Tours, PO Box: 23563, Doha, Qatar, +974 44502521, www.e2eqatar.com
Falcon Travels, PO Box: 22031, Doha, Qatar, +974 44354777, www.falcontravelqatar.com
Gulf Adventures, 29, Aspire Zone Street - Aspire Zone Al Rayyan City, PO Box: 18180 Qatar, +974 44221888, www.gulf-adventures.com
Net Tours Qatar, PO Box: 23080, Doha, Qatar, +974 4310902, www.nettours.com.qa
Regency Travel & Tours, Suhaim Bin Hamad Street, Doha, Qatar, +974 4434 4503/4718, www.regencyholidays.com
Qatar Adventure, Al Matar Street, PO Box: 13915, Doha, Qatar, +974 55694561, www.qataradventure.com
Qatar Desert Gate, Doha, PO Box: 18496 Ad Dawha, Qatar, +974 55594016, www.qatardesertgate.com
Qatar Inbound Tours, Commercial Street, Al Muaither, Al Rayyan, PO Box: 21153, +974 77451196, www.inboundtoursqatar.com
Qatar International Tours, PO Box: 55733 Doha, Qatar, +974 44551141, www.qittour.com

Qatar Ventures, Barwa Village Building No. 12, Shop No. 33, Doha, Qatar, +974 55776679, www.qatar-ventures.com

Clubs

Doha Sailing Club, Doha Sailing Club, PO Box: 4398 (9995), Doha, Qatar, +974 44439840, www.qmsf.com

General Sports

Equipment Megastores

Galaxy Sport, City Centre Mall, 3rd Floor, Qatar: +974 44822194; Villaggio Mall, Qatar: +974 44569143; Ezdan Mall, Qatar: +974 44922827, www.galaxysportqatar.com
GoSport, City Centre Mall, 3rd Floor, Qatar: +974 44631644; Villaggio Mall, Qatar: +974 44517574, www.facebook.com/gosport.qatar
Pearl Divers, PO Box: 2489, Doha, Qatar, +974 44449553, www.pearl-divers.org
Poseidon Dive Center, Ras Abu Abboud Street, Al Emadi Suites, Showroom #2, PO Box: 11538, Doha, Qatar, +974 66084040, www.pdcqatar.com
Qatar Scuba Center, 187 Al Mansoura Street, Al Mansoura Area, Doha, Qatar, +974 66662277, www.qatarscubacenter.com
Q Dive, Souq Al Najada cnr of Grand Hamad and Ali bin Abdulla Str.; Al-Odeid Aisle numbers 129-132, +974 55319507, www.qdive.net
World Marine Centre, PO Box: 6944, Doha, Qatar, +974 44360989, www.worldmarinecenter.webs.com

Boating & Sailing

Equipment

Regatta Sailing Academy, Al Isteglal Road, West Bay Lagoon, PO Box: 18104, Doha, Qatar, +974 55507846, www.regattasailingacademy.com

Distributors and Dealers

Speed Marine, Speed Marine, Museum Road, PO Box: 9145 Doha, Qatar, +974 44410109, www.speedmarinegroup.com

Horse Riding

Equestrian Clubs/Centres

Al Shaqab, PO Box: 90055, Doha, Qatar, +974 44546320, www.alshaqab.com
Qatar Racing & Equestrian Club, Racing and Equestrian Club, PO Box: 7559, Doha, Qatar, +974 44197664, www.qrec.gov.qa

Diving

Equipment

Al Fardan Marine Services, Najma Street (near Al Fardan Exchange), Doha, Qatar,

+974 44435626
Doha Sub Aqua Club, Doha Sub-Aqua Club, PO Box: 5048, Doha, Qatar, +974 66304061, www.dohasubaquaclub.com
Extreme Adventure, PO Box: 33002, Shop 3, 4 Ahmed Bin Ali Street (Bin Omran), Doha, Qatar, +974 44877884, www.extreme.qa
GoSport, City Centre Mall, 3rd Floor, Qatar: +974 44631644; Villaggio Mall, Qatar: +974 44517574, www.facebook.com/gosport.qatar
Pearl Divers, PO Box: 2489, Doha, Qatar, +974 44449553, www.pearl-divers.org
Poseidon Dive Center, Ras Abu Abboud Street, Al Emadi Suites, Showroom #2, PO Box: 11538, Doha, Qatar, +974 66084040, www.pdcqatar.com
Qatar Scuba Center, 187 Al Mansoura Street, Al Mansoura Area, Doha, Qatar, +974 66662277, www.qatarscubacenter.com
Q Dive, Souq Al Najada cnr of Grand Hamad and Ali bin Abdulla Str.; Al-Odeid Aisle numbers 129-132, +974 55319507, www.qdive.net
World Marine Centre, PO Box: 6944, Doha, Qatar, +974 44360989, www.worldmarinecenter.webs.com
Dive Centres
Al Fardan Marine Services, Najma Street (near Al Fardan Exchange), Doha, Qatar, +97444435626
Pearl Divers, Al Mirqab Al Jadeed Street, Doha, Qatar, +974 4444 9553, www.pearl-divers.org
Poseidon Dive Center, Ras Abu Abboud Street, Al Emadi Suites, Showroom #2, PO Box: 11538, Doha, Qatar, +974 66084040, www.pdcqatar.com
Qatar Divers, Marriott Hotel Marina Near Old Airport, Ras Abu Aboud Area, Doha, Qatar, +974 44313331, www.qatardivers.com
Qatar Marine, Go Sport City Center West Bay, PO Box: 16657, Doha, +974 553199507, www.qatarmarine.net
Qatar Scuba Centre, 187 Al Mansoura Street, Al Mansoura Area, Doha, Qatar, +974 66662277 / +974 44422234, www.qatarscubacenter.com

Qdive Marine Center, PO Box: 16657, Doha, Qatar, +974 44375065, www.qdive.net
World Marine Centre, Old Salata Street, near the Qatar National Museum, Doha, Qatar, +974 55508177

Fishing & Kayaking

Equipment

Al Mamzooze Marine Equipment, PO Box: 6449, Old Salata, Doha, Qatar, +974 44444238, almamzooze@qatar.net.qa
Fish World, PO Box: 1975, Doha, Qatar, +974 44340754

Motocross & ATV's

Dealers

Qatar Adventures, Barwa Village, Building # 9 Shop # 11, Doha, Qatar, +974 77700074

Fishing & Kayaking

Spearfishing Shops

Equipment

Al Kashat, Fishing and Hunting Equipment, Souq Waqif, next to the Falcon Souq, +974 66724828

Extreme Adventure, Shop 3,4 Ahmed Bin Ali Steet, Doha, +974 44877884, www.extreme.qa
State of Qatar (QatarSub), Souq Waqif, next to the Falcon Souq, +974 4431234, www.stateofqatar.com

Stand Up Paddeling, Kite & Surfing, Wakeboarding

Equipment, Operators

Fly-N-Ride, Al Muthaf Street, Doha, Qatar, +974 4498 2284, www.fly-n-ride.com
Flo Kite School, Westbay, Doha, +974 55041039, www.flokiteschool.com
Kitesurfing Qatar, +97430179108, www.kitesurfingqatar.com
QSPU, Qanat Quartir, Costa Malaz, The Pearl-Qc, Doha, Qatar, +974 66602830, www.qsup.me



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